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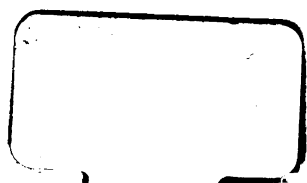
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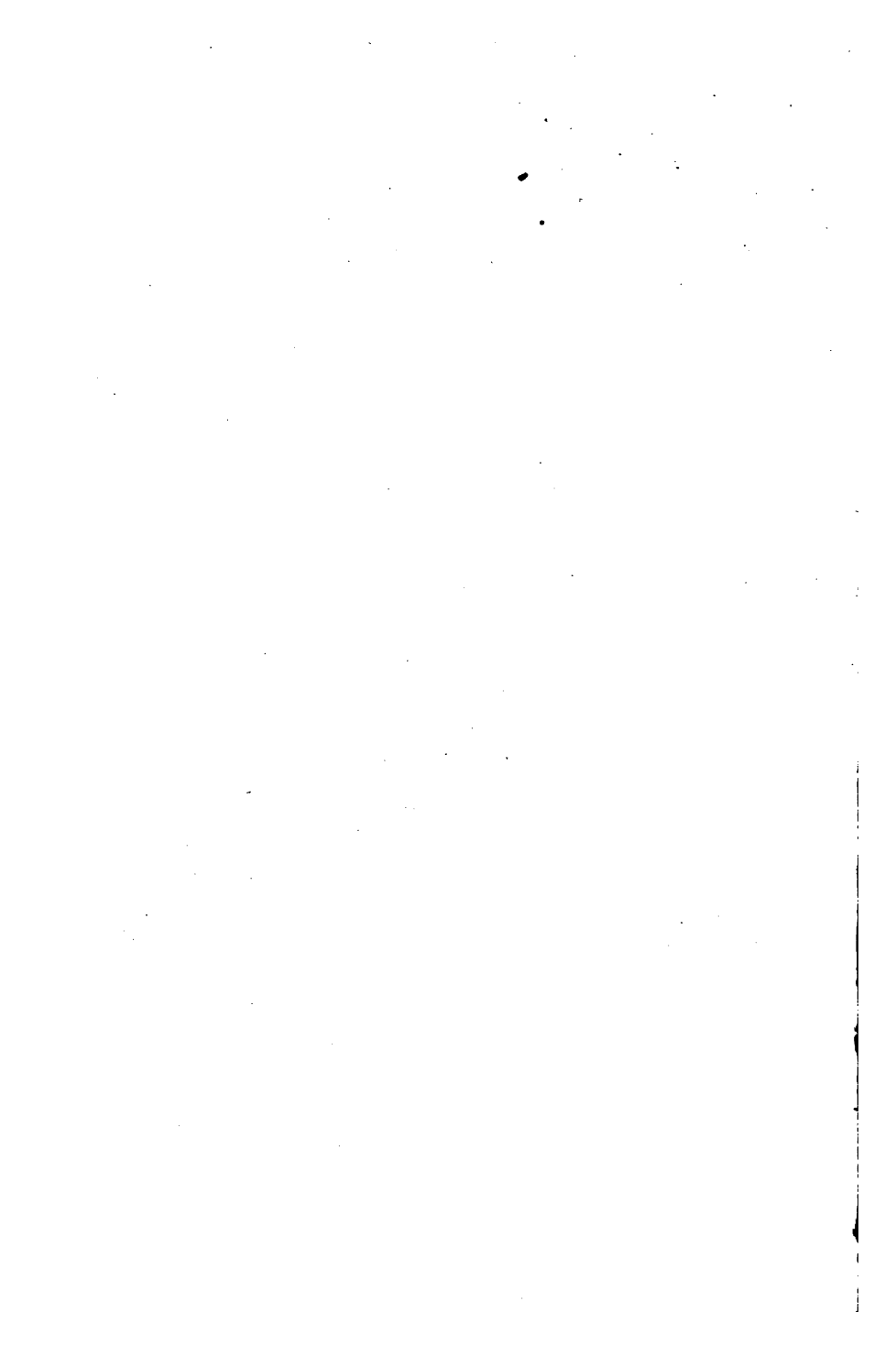
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THE EDUCATION OF JACQUELINE



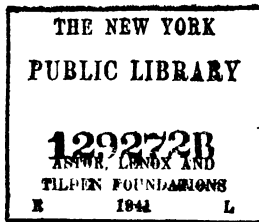
THE EDUCATION OF JACQUELINE

BY
CLAIRE DE PRATZ



NEW YORK
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1910

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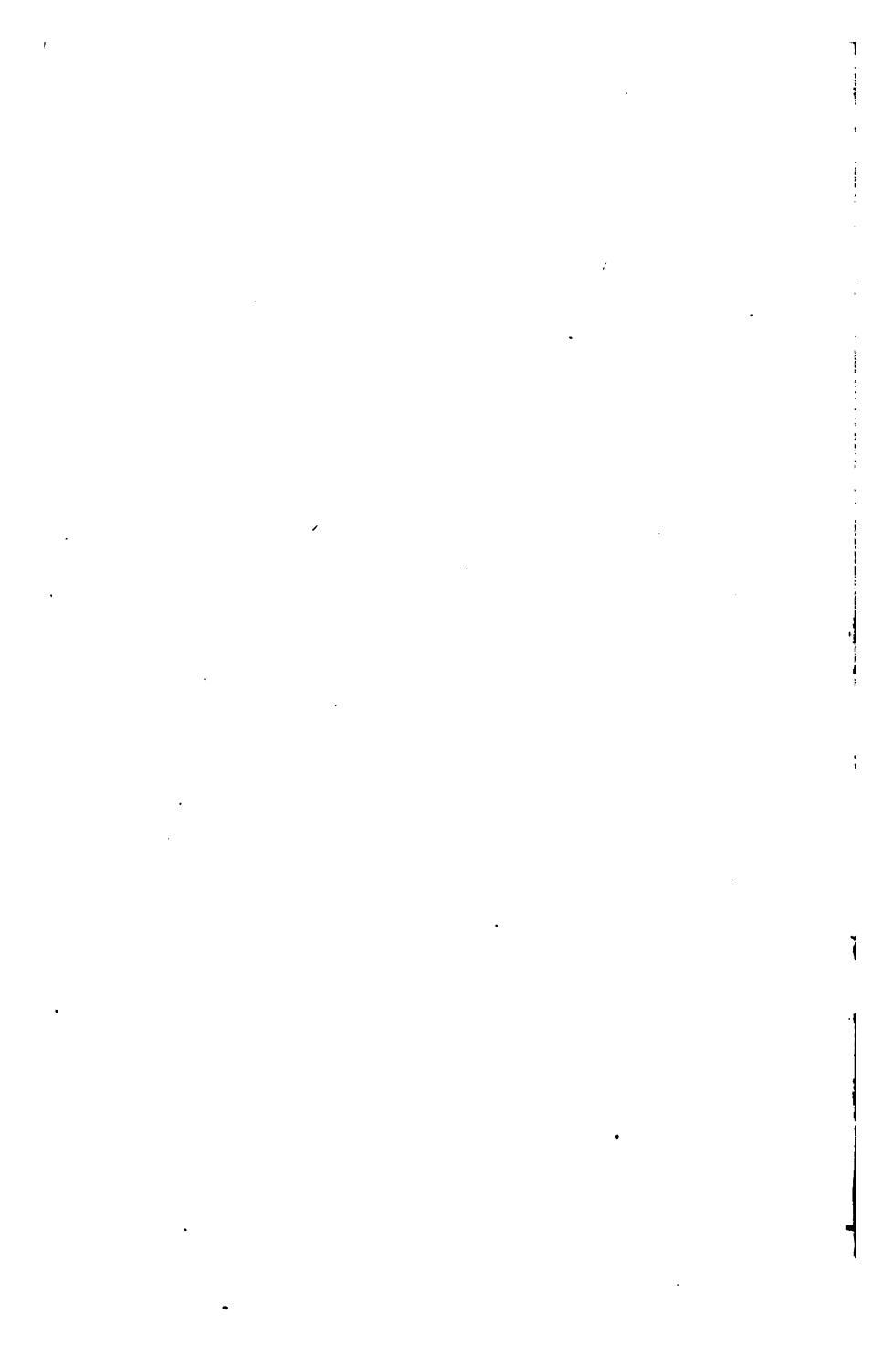


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*Je dédie ce livre
à
Lady Grove
dont j'admire le talent
et dont je chéris l'amitié*



CHAPTER I

FRANÇOISE RÉVILLE was crooning her fatherless daughter to sleep in the dimly lighted room. Her voice sounded soft and rang with sadness as she repeated the familiar lullaby:

Do do, bébé do,
L'enfant dormira tantôt.

Françoise looked at the child's peaceful little face and once more noticed with delight the likeness of Jacqueline to her father. Although the child lay restfully in its tiny cot, the mother swayed her body backwards and forwards as she sang, moving with the rhythm of the ticking clock on the mantelpiece of the darkened room.

Do do, bébé do,
L'enfant dormira tantôt.

A softly-shaded lamp shed its rosy radiance over the writing-desk between the two tall windows opening on to the quiet provincial street that was deserted every evening after seven o'clock. An intense calm reigned around, which was broken only now and again by the noise of crockery being washed in the kitchen.

Françoise turned from the contemplation of her

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child and gazed round the room with its high luxurious bed draped with silken hangings—with its lofty mirrored wardrobe of polished walnut wood that matched the bed—with its portières of silk, like those of the huge bed, half covering a doorway that led to a smaller dressing-room beyond. This room had been hers during the five years of her married life with her dear husband, Adrien Réville, whom death had claimed suddenly, imperatively, without warning, less than a month ago. Here her little girl—her four-year-old baby—Jacqueline had been born, and here she had prayed by the side of her husband's dead body before they had placed him in his coffin. In this room she had lived the intensest years of her life.

When Adrien had brought her to her new home in Rouen only a few hours after the wedding ceremony at Vitré, she had been a young girl of twenty-two—as totally ignorant of life, of the mysteries of life and of marriage, as only a young French girl can be. Brought up by careful parents in view of a husband who would demand not only an innocent but also an ignorant wife, her convent education had but emphasized her home training. The good nuns had taught her her Catechism, the Lives of the Saints and *les bonnes manières*, besides sufficient French grammar and syntax to enable her to write a stilted conventional letter. Her mother had taught her to sew, to embroider and to cook. But of the realities of life or of human nature, she knew nothing.

And now she was a widow, not thirty years of age, alone in the world with her daughter, a child of four,

without a single relation, with very few friends and with the entire responsibility of shaping two lives, henceforth upon her shoulders.

Jacqueline!—her little child! her only darling—the one thing she now had in the world to love! And she gazed upon the child with hungry eyes. Shortly they would be leaving this roof together—she and Jacqueline—leaving this home, this room, this refuge—to go forth alone in a strange city, among new surroundings and in very reduced circumstances.

Even now Françoise could hardly realize what had happened to her during the last month. Events had rushed so quickly since the evening when Adrien had returned from a short business visit to Paris and complained of having caught a chill in the train on the return journey. Two days later the doctor had informed Françoise that there was very little hope of saving him and three days later Adrien was dead. Her love, her husband, the father of her little Jacqueline—and the one creature who was her very law! Yes; he was dead!

Then had followed terrible days when she had been forced to turn from all her regrets for Adrien and repress her tears to think only of practical issues—for there was no one to turn to for help or even for advice. She had lost both her parents during the first three years of her wifehood, and Adrien's had both died before she had met him. There was Pomm, of course, her husband's great friend; but he was not much good for practical things, and besides he was away in China upon his naval duties. Françoise, who

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had never thought for herself, who had been as a child in the hands of Adrien, who had never acted in any way except under his direction and with his advice or sanction, was now forced to rely upon herself, and herself alone—to think, to plan, to decide, and to defend her own interests as well as those of her daughter.

In the midst of her sad musings, the sleeping child murmured fretfully and stirred upon her pillows, and mechanically Françoise chasing away harrowing thoughts, though her heart was heavy as lead, murmured once more the soothing lullaby:

Do do, bébé do.

Like all French mothers of her generation, Françoise allowed no hireling to tend her child. It was she who bathed and put her to bed every night of her life and sang her to sleep holding her hand. There is little other method or system of education in the French mother's mind for very little children but just the tender ministering from mother to child which creates a link between them that lasts for ever, and that no divergence of opinion or of tastes in after life can ever entirely destroy.

As the child lost consciousness once more and silence again engulfed the room, the gaze of Françoise penetrating the gloom seemed to see once more before her the form of her beloved. At the foot of the wide bed, between the writing-desk and the white lace-covered dressing-table whence the polished tor-

toise-shell and crystal ornaments shot forth scintillating touches through the darkness, she saw Adrien's tall frame as she had seen him living, the night before he had left her for the fatal journey—his eyes tender and loving, his white teeth gleaming through his smile.

He left her that last evening so gay and joyous, as if the short journey to Paris were a keen delight to him. She had always been somewhat pained by his evident eagerness to leave Rouen and to take his regular small trips to Paris—the city of charm and allurements. That he was separated from her and from his child during these trips did not seem to affect him, though Françoise's own tender heart always felt a pang each time he left them both so merrily. On this last journey how she had implored him to take her with him—just this once for a change. But he, smilingly, had put her off as always, saying that a mother's place was with her child; that, besides, it would be absurd to take one's wife with one to business appointments at the Ministry of Finance.

For after their marriage five years before Adrien Réville, who had been an attaché at the Ministry of War for many years, had been appointed *Percepteur*—that is to say, an officer of the Inland Revenue—at Rouen, two hours from Paris. And here the young couple had lived, in a charming little house with a large garden on the outskirts of the town, some distance from the office of Adrien's *Perception*. Here little fair-haired and dark-eyed Jac-

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queline had been born. All through the five years of his residence in Rouen, Adrien had been forced to go up to Paris about once a week to the Ministry of Finance. But he never allowed his wife to accompany him, notwithstanding her entreaties. His opinion, he explained, was that a young wife does better to keep to the simpler ways and customs of the provinces. Frequent visits to Paris were always demoralising for young married women, and the sight of the luxuries of Paris life might suggest tastes that were not seemly in an economical provincial wife. And of course Françoise had been subservient to Adrien's judgment. For her, Adrien was always right.

As she dwelt upon these memories of the past, that were still so near her, she stopped crooning her song, and the spoilt babe, already so unconsciously used to its mother's soothing voice as it slumbered, burst out again into an angry cry, as if in protestation. So Françoise let her vision fade away and took up her singing once more.

Do do, bébé do.

And again the child slept.

Then Françoise, rising softly so as not to rouse the sleeping child, left the side of the cot and turned again to the writing desk at which she had sat most of the afternoon, sorting old letters, arranging and classing together paid bills, etc., for, leaving the house in a short time, she was anxious to put all her affairs as well as those of her late husband in order. The new

occupants of the house were to settle into it in about a fortnight. The wife of Adrien's successor had visited the villa from basement to garret and had declared herself satisfied with her inspection. Her husband had therefore taken on the remaining part of the lease, and Françoise had already been up to Paris to seek a new abiding-place for herself and her child. She had signed the lease, for three years, of a flat near the Place Wagram. She had also arranged to sell the larger part of her furniture to the new occupants of her present house. The rest she was to take with her to Paris.

The bureau of her dead husband was of a solid Henri II. design, the top forming a large square writing-table. From the floor at the two sides rose thick square columns that each held six drawers. Each separate drawer was fitted with a strong lock. Françoise had never touched this bureau during her husband's lifetime. He had told her that the most important papers which concerned the *Perception* were kept there and that its contents were officially private.

In the strong iron safe—in the left-hand corner of the room close to the writing-desk—he kept under lock and key the various sums collected at the *Perception*, which he paid in to the Ministry at only stated intervals. According to French law, this safe, as well as all the other pieces of household furniture provided with locks and keys had been sealed up by the local authorities after Adrien's death. But when these formalities were over, Françoise had

taken into her possession the bunch of keys upon which were those that opened not only the safe but also the drawers of the bureau. During the whole the preceding afternoon she had been clearing out the drawers. She had completely finished arranging those of the right hand with the exception of the very last one. She turned to this one now, and opened it listlessly. The task of arranging and sorting official papers was not congenial to her and she looked forward with some eagerness to finishing the entire right-hand column of small drawers before retiring to bed. She intended working upon the drawers of the left-hand column the following day. She therefore inserted the keys into the lock of the last drawer, and pulled the drawer out wide.

Inside, there were three large packets of letters, each neatly packed together and tied with a faded mauve ribbon. The ribbon had been tied twice across each packet and fastened into a bow. Each bow was securely fixed with a large sealing-wax seal. She took up the largest packet which lay in front of the drawer. The top envelope was addressed to her husband at the *Perception*—in a woman's handwriting. She noticed that the seal that secured the ribbon bow had been sealed with Adrien's own signet ring. Françoise recognised the design of the two interlaced letters—A. R.—only too well. It had been a present from herself to her husband on the first anniversary of their wedding.

There were a goodly number of letters in each packet, and perhaps a hundred letters in all. Most

of the envelopes were mauve in colour. Françoise looked again at the handwriting on the top envelope, and then, pressing back several envelopes, saw that the handwriting on each envelope was the same as that on the top one. She inspected the other packets and discovered that the letters they contained were all addressed in the same handwriting. She turned round the parcels in her hands and was just about to break open the seal of the largest when she noticed a small slip of white paper that had been passed through the ribbon at the side of the packet. On this was written in Adrien's own writing, very clearly and distinctly, "All the letters in this drawer are to be burned unopened at my death." And it was signed "Adrien Réville" in the handwriting Françoise knew so well. Dropping them hurriedly, she thrust the packets back into the drawer. The habit of implicit obedience to her husband's orders was so strong that it almost seemed to her as if Adrien stood there now behind her chair and in his quiet, even voice—gentle as that of an indulgent parent speaking to a child—had told her to leave the letters alone. . . . Then a sense of the reality of things stole over her once more and she found herself looking down upon the open drawer with wide, startled eyes.

She took up the larger packet of letters once more almost mechanically, and again examined the handwriting of the address. Yes—it was certainly a woman's writing. . . . But the letters were addressed to the *Perception*—so they were evidently

connected with some question of over-taxation. Protestations were often made to the *Percepteur* of the district by ratepayers, and so many of these came from women. For the French female householder is an eminently thrifty and economical person who does not accept overcharges without protesting.

But—and the thought thrust itself into Françoise's mind once more with blinding swiftness—why were there so many letters? It seemed incredible that one woman should have so much to say upon the subject. . . . And why had Adrien written the superscription ordering their destruction without perusal in case of his own death? That was strange indeed!

One after the other, she took up the packets of letters once more and examined the postmarks. Curiously enough most of the letters had been posted in Paris—at the post-office of the Rue Jouffroy. The top one of the largest packet—evidently the last received of all—bore, quite distinctly, the date of the day before Adrien's journey to Paris—that journey which had ended so fatally. . . . 'Ah, yes! she was beginning to remember now . . . clearly. That day before Adrien had left Rouen, she had gone to fetch her husband at the *Perception*, and just as they were leaving to go home together, the six o'clock evening post had come in. Adrien had taken it from the postman's hands himself—and from among several other letters he had drawn out one in a pale mauve envelope, and had put in into his pocket without reading it. As he often did likewise with those letters received at his

Perception with which he wished to deal personally, Françoise had not been greatly astonished at the time. But she remembered the incident now quite clearly. . . . The top letter of the packet—was that very letter! Yes . . . then he must have classed it, at once, that very evening with its fellows before leaving for Paris the next morning. For after his return from that last journey he had never touched the drawers of his bureau again.

Suddenly a curious, obscure and nameless dread began to grow upon her, and her heart began to beat tumultuously as if it were already conscious of some sudden deep emotion that had not yet reached her brain. . . .

She felt strangely perturbed, all her sensibility was suddenly aroused. The memory of the incidents of that last walk back from the *Perception* with her husband had evoked so many things in her mind. . . . She looked round the room now, and gazed again over to the spot where her child was sleeping as if trying to confirm the reality of her own being . . . for so many confused thoughts seemed to be whirling through her brain at the same moment. . . . The regular breathing of the child in the warm atmosphere of the room afforded her some reassuring calm. She turned again to the drawer and yet once more picked up the letters. Should she break the seal and open them? Yet Adrien's instructions were most explicit—"to be burned unopened at my death." . . . Françoise was undecided. She was suddenly fired with a strange

curiosity—yet long years of obedient submission had forged their enslaving chains around her. . . . She could not have said what she experienced. It was not yet conscious fear or foreboding and yet it was a deep emotion. She had had such unquestioning belief in her husband that she had always implicitly obeyed his slightest injunctions. . . . If he wished the letters to be burned, he must have his reasons and in the opinion of Françoise, Adrien's reasons had always been excellent.

So she put the packet down once more inside the drawer, and as she did so, there was suddenly a ring at the door of the house. Momentarily Françoise forgot the letters as she listened to the tinkling sound, muffled in the distance, which she knew to be the postman's ring. Clémence—the maid who had been with her since her marriage and who was to remain on with her now as the sole *bonne-à-tout faire* in her new home—entered the room softly and offered her two letters on a salver. One of them, marked *Personnelle*, had been to the office of the *Perception* and re-directed to his predecessor's private address by the new *Percepteur*, who was already settled in at the *Perception*.

Françoise took the two letters mechanically without glancing at them while Clémence went on tiptoe toward the small cot.

"Elle dort?" she inquired in a whisper with all the ease and freedom of a faithful servant who has become part of the family.

"Yes," murmured Françoise gently, as she moved

aside to let Clémence get a glimpse of the sleeping child.

But the sadness of Françoise's voice struck keenly on the ear of the faithful servant.

"*Voyons, madame, voyons.* . . . You must not let your spirits run down like that. Isn't *she* a comfort to you?"—and she pointed to the child. "Isn't she a great comfort—the darling child, the blessed angel!" and Clémence's eyes glistened with pride and love as she looked at the sleeping child.

"Yes, Clémence, she is indeed," said Françoise, laying her hand gently on the kind creature's arm. "But it is a hard thing when one is widowed and alone at my age."

Clémence looked straight at her mistress. She did not wish to show her any personal emotion or tenderness. She did not mind showing her love for the child, but she thought it wiser not to humour the *Patronne*.

"But you are not alone yet, *madame!* You've baby—bless her heart—and me and Monsieur Pomm. Besides, you are young, and . . ." But Clémence left the room, the rest of her sentence unspoken. Her own eyes were bright with tears which she steadfastly strove to hide from her mistress.

Françoise remained some moments by the side of the cot contemplating her sleeping child. And as she stood there smiling the adoring smile of the young mother, she represented a fine type of French womanhood. Dark, yet luminous eyes, soft brown hair in great masses coiled up in the shape of a huge eight

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on the top of her head, as was the fashion of her day, delicate, narrow waist, wide hips, full-curved bosom. She was indeed good to look at. She resumed her seat at the bureau, placing the lamp at her right elbow, and slowly and listlessly began to open the two letters brought by the evening's post.

The first she opened was from Pomm—Adrien's best and, indeed, only friend. As she conjured up her vision of this dear friend of her dead husband, she sighed and tears arose in her eyes. What a blow the news of Adrien's death must have been to the old naval officer who had been as father, mother and brother in one to Adrien Réville from his early youth upwards! How well she remembered the first time she had met him! It was on the very evening that Adrien had been presented to her by her parents as a possible fiancé. After she had left the convent-school, her father and mother who adored her—for she was their only child and upon her they had centred all their hopes—had sought a husband for her as is the duty of all self-respecting French parents. Through the intermediary of old personal friends—Monsieur and Madame Dumont—Adrien Réville had been suggested as a possible suitor for the hand of Françoise de Belval. A small party had been given at the house of their friends in order to bring about a meeting. Though Adrien Réville's father had been a great friend of theirs formerly, the Dumonts knew little or nothing of the young man himself. But they had ascertained that he was a "*jeune homme d'avenir*," and though he possessed no fortune of his own, they

recognised his right—in seeking a wife—to demand a dowry which would enable him to provide the necessary "*cautionnement*" which went with the nomination to a post in the Finance department.

When first the young and upright Adrien had bowed before Mademoiselle de Belval, she had been immediately struck by his good looks, his easy gracious manner, his charming voice and his long curling moustache. As for Adrien's great friend—Jean Pommeret—who accompanied him, he had been sympathetic to the young girl immediately. Instinctively and at once she had felt his goodness and his reliability. Pommeret—or rather Pomm, as Adrien when still a child had affectionately rechristened him—was in appearance as in character everything that Adrien was not. He had no good looks, no elegance, no grace; but he was loyal and true to the core and he looked upon Adrien as his son. He possessed no relations in the world and to him Adrien was everything and his indulgence for the young man's faults was limitless.

As she opened his letter now Françoise trembled at the thought of the sad brokenhearted words she was about to read. She knew that Pomm's one dream was to retire from the Navy in a few years' time, then freed from all duties, to settle down in his beloved Paris—and among his beloved books—his unique passion—in the tiny flat he rented near the Luxembourg gardens, and to spend nearly all his week-ends with his friends at Rouen. Pomm had been away in Indo-China when she had telegraphed

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him the terrible news of Adrien's sudden death and this was his first letter after reception of the news.

The plain, simple missive was characteristic of the man. He was incapable of expressing the depth of his feeling, although his love for Adrien and for his wife and child was the deepest affection of his kind old heart. The news he had just received had quite broken him down; yet he could not express his misery in words.

"My dear Madame Françoise," he wrote, "I cannot tell you what a blow your telegram deals me. I can hardly believe the truth of the sad news! I send you the deepest expression of my condolence. But I know that you have a brave heart, and that the thought of your young child who needs your care and devotion will help you to bear this great blow. You have Faith too—and I am sure that you will find help and consolation in God. I shall be back in Europe in six months. Rely on my help if I can be of any use to you, and let me have more details of the death of my poor Adrien, and hear of all your new plans.

"Your respectful and affectionate friend,

"JEAN POMMERET."

Françoise brushed away her tears, and, so as not to dwell too long upon her sad thoughts, and to brace herself up against a too-depressing sorrow, she turned her attention to the second letter. She held it in her hand and looked at the lilac envelope. At first sight—her thoughts still intent upon Pomm's missive—she

gazed at it vacantly, and did not recognize the writing. The new *Percepteur* had drawn a thick line in blue pencil through the name and address, and had re-directed it in his own heavy writing to Madame Réville. But through the strong blue lines Françoise could still read the address of the *Perception* and the handwriting seemed not unknown to her. It was a gently sloped feminine hand. The envelope bore the Paris postmark.

Several times she turned it over, dwelling lovingly on the name inscribed on it, "Monsieur Adrien Réville," and reflecting on the irony of a letter being addressed to a dead man. A slightly trembling "*Personnelle*" was written on the top left-hand corner of the envelope, which explained its having been forwarded to Monsieur Réville's personal address. A faint perfume of violets arose from it.

Again and again Françoise turned it over and gazed upon it, and then by degrees the conviction was borne into her mind that the handwriting was familiar. But still, for some unaccountable reason, she did not recognise it. She broke open the seal. As she drew out the letter, again a faint odour of violets came forth. She straightened out the folded sheet and read the first line:

"Mon bien aimé—my best beloved——"

Immediately she stopped reading and picked up the envelope again to realize more completely whether or not it were really addressed to Adrien. But the writing on the envelope was unmistakable. It was the

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same as that of the letter, and it distinctly blazoned forth the name "Monsieur Adrien Réville."

Françoise, not understanding in the least what the letter meant, proceeded to read it:

"Mon bien aimé,—Notwithstanding the terrible risk I run in writing to you again, I cannot refrain from doing so, for I am so terribly anxious about you. What can have happened? Since I saw you off at the St. Lazare Station last month I have not had a line from you. Are you ill, my beloved one? I am distraught with fear. Surely you have not ceased to care for me suddenly after all our years of faithful love and devotion?—especially so soon after the two days we spent together last month in such delirious delight? . . . when the dear early days of our passion seemed renewed once more—re-created? No, you cannot have ceased to love me, for you cannot forget our past and all that I have been to you. Notwithstanding your marriage and my own fetters I feel that I *must* go to you, if you do not answer my repeated appeals. But I dare not; though if I knew that you were ill and in danger, then I would fling all our patient years of prudence to the winds—and go to you, my Beloved!

"I am wondering whether you have written, and if the letters have been intercepted? Perhaps *she*—the woman who, alas! has rights over you—has begun to suspect something—as my husband began to suspect until we quieted his fears with the announcement of your marriage five years ago. Beloved—Beloved—

what can I do? I am half mad with fear and anxiety. And yet, have you not been more than good to her? Have you not more than repaid her for the service she did you when she gave you her dowry for your *cautionnement*? Alas! I have done all in my power to quell jealousy of her in my tortured heart. O, dearest, there are moments when I wonder whether you do not love her now—yes, love her—the woman to whom I gave you, and who is now the mother of your child. . . .

“Darling, darling, answer me. Forgive me the folly of writing thus. My mind is distraught. I am broken-hearted! I am dying for news of you. If you are ill, find some means of letting me know. For pity’s sake—for our love’s sake—put me out of this overwhelming—this insupportable—suspense.

“Yours ever and ever

“CÉCILE.”

Françoise read through this letter to the end as if she read some book or play. It seemed in no way to concern her. At first she was as if petrified. All thought, all reflection, all power of reasoning, seemed crushed out of her. Then slowly she began to realize what this revelation meant to her, and in her dismay and surprise it seemed—before she could coherently grasp the entire meaning of it—that her own inner and more vital self were withering away. It was as if life itself were leaving her. . . .

But she made an effort to overcome a nauseating feeling of horror and pull herself together. Un-

consciously her swooning eyes gazed towards the darkest corner of the room where it had seemed a few moments ago she saw the spectre of her husband Adrien—the well-beloved. . . . And this time, as she looked, she seemed to see him again. But in the dark shadows, as she gazed at him, his features seemed distorted into a ghastly grin. . . .

And slowly, as Françoise looked upon that hideous image, her gaze became dispassionate and she began slowly—very, very slowly—to understand that her conception of Adrien had never been real, and that even the ghost of that false conception was now crumbling to the dust. Her entire understanding of his character had been false from the first. He was not the superior, almost impeccable, being she had believed him to be, but an entirely different person whom she had never known at all—whose real life had indeed been unsuspected by her till now.

A terrible fear assailed her heart, and her blood seemed frozen in her veins—for love dies hard, and what dies harder still is our own erring human conception of life and things. But she was forced to admit to herself, nevertheless, that the man she had loved with all the intensity of a first young passion—had never really been hers! He had given what he possessed of heart and soul to the woman who had written this letter. . . . His attitude to her—his wife—had been but a part he had played—with a special end in view, clearly stated—the obtaining of the necessary *cautionnement* for his post and the settling of his future on the firm basis of a secure per-

sonal income. Incidentally, he had gained a wife, but, though he had been kind to her, he had never really loved her. She had been to him but as an adjunct to his post. His actions had always been self-centred. . . . She remembered now numberless small details of their every-day life. He had never thought of anything but his own material interests, and *she*, Françoise, had only been taken into consideration by him inasmuch as she served these interests.

In that hour of her realization of the true Adrien, Françoise could feel nothing but a baffled feeling of impotence; and the passion as well as the affectionate tenderness she had cherished for her husband, together with all her former erroneous conception of his character, fell from her as a heavy cloak falls from the shoulders of its wearer. But it left her with her heart emptied of all tender feeling, of all sweetness. She had been deceived—tricked—cruelly misled. In a sickening revulsion of feeling, life appeared to her now only as a callous farce not worth the living. . . . And immediately beginning to generalize without measure or discernment, she asked herself, if all men were false, and measured their affections by the measure of mere material interests—then what was marriage—what was love?

As if in response to her bitter question, she suddenly seemed to hear a whisper in her brain that was its answer. "Maternity," it breathed. And Françoise suddenly rose with a spring and hastened across the room towards her child's cot. Jacqueline

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—her child! . . . But *his* child too—the child of the liar, of the faithless husband. . . . And gazing at her own sleeping babe she saw the mark of him upon her; his very features were hers! In her blind fury, she leaned forward almost as if to strike, upon the face of the sleeping child, the likeness of its father. . . . But the babe smiled sweetly in her sleep, and Françoise, all her passion suddenly spent, gazed upon her, with love and smiled back in answer.

Ah yes! Jacqueline was hers—and hers alone now. No one should tear her from her hungry arms. She at least was real and true! And notwithstanding her likeness to her father, she was Françoise's alone. No one could ever take her child from her to make her unreal whom she had brought into the world, bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, in pain and travail. So life yet held hope for her, since it held Jacqueline. And Françoise, suddenly falling down by the side of the cot that held the sleeping child, burst into tears and wept—wept—wept.

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About an hour later she rose from her knees that were stiff and bent beneath the burden of her own weight. There was more peace in her heart now—though she was still conscious that something dreadful had happened that had altered the whole course of her life, and had robbed her of almost all that had made life possible. She moved again across the room where the lamp shed its rosy glow on the table, and mechanically she turned up the wick, which had burnt low. Her listless glance fell again, not on the letter

she had just read, but upon its envelope. . . .
"Monsieur Adrien Réville" . . . she read the name as if it were that of a stranger.

Suddenly, with incontrovertible clearness, a new conviction thrust itself into her mind. The writing on the envelope before her—it was the same as that upon the packets of letters she had found in the drawer . . . ! How extraordinary it now seemed to her that she should not have noticed it before!

She sank down into her chair, and, stooping, drew forth the three packets of letters from their resting-place. Upon the table, right beneath the clear light of the lamp again she compared the writing of the top envelope with that of the newly-received letter. There could be no possible doubt. The writer of the packets of letters which Adrien had decreed should be burnt at his death was the same "Cécile" who had signed the letter she had just read.

She tore away the slip of white paper that held her husband's last order to her. . . . For the first time she disobeyed him! She looked again at Adrien's writing, "To be burnt unopened at my death." . . . She smiled, somewhat ironically, certainly cruelly. Her determination was quickly taken. She would show her contempt for Adrien's last mute message to her and read every single one of the letters now, since his well-guarded secret was hers. She broke the seal and tore away the binding ribbon. The whole packet of letters fell in a loose unbound sheaf upon the table.

Settling herself in her chair, she began to read.

The very first letters were dated ten years back. The last had been written on the day which had preceded his departure for the last fateful journey to Paris. He had kept it in his pocket while he walked back from the *Perception* to the house with his wife. Françoise remembered their conversation during that walk together. They had been planning together a holiday at the sea, which would be beneficial to their little Jacqueline. Once home and in the privacy of his study, Adrien had probably torn it open and read it, and later on surreptitiously gone to his room and locked it away with the others while his wife was putting Jacqueline to bed. And, when he had left for Paris early the next morning in answer to Cécile's unexpected summons, announcing that her husband had been called into the provinces on urgent business and that she would have two whole days' complete freedom, he had kissed his wife tenderly—on the lips—with the tender, loving kiss of devoted lovers who part for a short time. Pah! Françoise wiped her chill mouth now with her handkerchief as if to obliterate that Judas kiss. . . . And probably his "Cécile" had met him at the station on his arrival in Paris, and to her, too, he had given the long, deep kiss of lovers who after being parted are at last reunited. . . . Françoise trembled with disgust and horror, and settled herself again to read the letters from beginning to end in order and sequence from the first one of ten years ago, till the last of to-night's post. She was determined to know the whole wretched story.

But as she read, and the minutes of the night grew into hours, a curious change of feeling and of impression grew slowly upon her. . . . Though her disgust with Adrien almost seemed to increase with every moment, her first instinctive feeling of loathing against the woman who had written these letters began to decrease and give way to another feeling which, if it held no sympathy, was yet of commiseration and pity. Françoise paused for a moment and reflected. . . . It was strange that she should feel thus, but she was forced to admit to herself that her feelings were roused by the woman who had written the letters she held. . . . What treasures of deep devoted love, what abnegation of self in the service of the beloved one, Françoise read here! What passion, too, was expressed. How pale, colourless, almost absurd, did Françoise's own girlish love for her husband seem beside this glowing emotion—how *fade*, how insipid! Yes, indeed, the whole real life of Adrien as she had never known it was now revealed to her! Through all the five years of her marriage she had been but a young and inexperienced child, to whom Adrien had appeared as a god of wisdom. But to this woman, older and wiser in the ways of the world than he was, he had seemed only as a very young and inexperienced man, who, having no family ties or affections, was lonely and needed her care and affection. She had directed, advised, educated him, helped him to succeed. Yes; truly this Cécile had loved him almost as a mother! What tenderness, what adoration there was in her heart for this young,

seductive, and ambitious man! He had evidently revealed to her his loathing for poverty and for mediocrity, and finally, after many struggles with herself and her own love, it had been she, herself, who had suggested obtaining for him a provincial post in the Finances which should satisfy his material ambitions though it took him away from herself and gave him to another. . . . In her letters she alluded constantly to her husband and spoke not only of his friendship for the young man but of his willingness to help Adrien with his influence. Then there were other letters in which the writer showed some fear of discovery on the part of her too-confiding husband. . . . And gradually the advisability of a *marriage de raison* for Adrien had been deliberately broached between the lovers as the only possible means of appeasing her husband's now fully aroused suspicions and at the same time of putting Adrien into the position he desired. . . . There were letters at that epoch which betrayed deep wounds in the woman's heart, and many small allusions which suggested her great unexpressed hope—that Adrien would refuse not only her husband's help but also her own sacrifice. . . . But he had not refused. Later letters from him had presumably acquainted Madame Ducastel with the negotiations concerning his first interview with Françoise herself, for he had evidently alluded to his fiancée as an "amiable petite sottie." And it was Cécile—generous-hearted Cécile—who pointed out to him all that he would owe to the

"petite sotte" and begged him to be kind and considerate to the poor child. . . .

As she read, Françoise felt that by degrees all the old shackles of her education were loosening around her heart and falling away. She was surprised to find herself feeling sentiments which had never been dictated to her by others—sentiments, in fact, which others would certainly have condemned in her. For now she was beginning to feel sympathy for this Cécile—for her husband's mistress, for an erring wife—she, the impeccable, untried Françoise, whom neither sorrow nor life yet had touched! The passionate devotion, the selflessness which breathed in her letters revealed Cécile to her rival as a tender, loving, and touchingly sincere creature. . . . The writer spoke often of the misunderstanding between herself and her husband. He had been a bad husband—faithless from the first—neglecting her and leaving her in loneliness. . . . And she had had no child, though her heart yearned with warm maternal love. . . . So all her devotion, tenderness and love she had given to the young, lonely and beautiful boy that Adrien once had been.

And Françoise understood her gift of herself, and, understanding, could not accuse. She could not even find it in her heart to condemn when she learnt that even after Adrien's marriage—and even after her own renouncement—Cécile had not had the courage to resist her lover's supplications and had yielded again.

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Françoise was not even astonished to find herself thus sympathizing with the woman who had so long held her own husband's heart. For the first time in her young, guarded and conventional life, Françoise had begun to think and feel for herself and found that she had acquired a broader, more generous and more human outlook.

By the time she had read through a few of the letters, Françoise had realised who the "Cécile" of the letters must be. One or two had been written upon notepaper with an address engraved on the top of the front page, and the address—220 Place Malesherbes—was not unknown to her. It was the Paris address of the rich and influential Deputy, Sebastian Ducastel.

Françoise therefore understood that the writer of the letters was Cécile Ducastel, the Deputy's wife.

CHAPTER II

THE influence of the shock produced on Françoise Réville's mind by the revelations contained in Madame Ducastel's letters would have resulted in a serious perturbation of the brain had she not been particularly strong and healthy, with nerves in a condition which enabled her to resist her sorrow with firmness.

She lay awake all through the long hours of the night, trying to realize in what manner her discovery was going to affect her future actions. She knew it to be the downfall of all the joy and hope she had built up for her own store in life. Her whole education had prepared her to be a victim. And now she knew that she had not only been a victim but had also been a dupe, and that if in herself she could find the strength to resist the blow, at least she would never be able to re-educate herself.

Ah, how well Adrien had befooled her and made her his willing tool to gain his own ends! For how well he had counterfeited love! . . . How truly sincere he had seemed at times! How tender! How careful he had been of her before Jacqueline's birth, and how loving, how more devoted than ever, he had been afterwards!

Now that her brain was clear, now that for the first time in her life, emerging from the guidance of other minds, she was awakened to the reality of

conscious existence herself, she sought within her brain to reconstitute Adrien's moral self as he had revealed himself to her through the five years of her married life. His attitude towards her had always seemed perfect. But what means had she possessed of judging what was perfect and what was not so in a man's conduct towards his wife? Her parents had prepared her only for one thing, subservience to her husband. He was not only to be the "Prince Charming" but also the teacher, the initiator, who would reveal life to her. Had Adrien then failed in this? No, not entirely. In the first hours of her married life he had been tender, though passionate, but not so vehement as to appear brutal to the young and innocent girl that Françoise was at the time of her marriage. The heart of the bewildered young bride had soon been won by the husband, and soon she had fallen deeply in love with him.

The honeymoon had been spent in Italy, where for four weeks they wandered from town to town, and here Françoise was much less taken up with the art treasures of the museums than with her husband. He was pre-eminently the lover—the subtle, tender lover—which a Frenchman can be at will when a charming and very young girl is given to him for a wife. But in these early days Françoise was unable to respond to his caresses as he desired. His somewhat too passionate entreaties at first frightened her. She was too young, too inexperienced to realize that Adrien was in love merely with love and not with herself. But as his

taste for her had slowly exhausted itself, her own tenderness for her husband had increased, and at times her more conscious and growing passion had warmed Adrien to a semblance of love, which she in her ignorance believed to be the true responding light to her own flame.

After these first few weeks of marital happiness, the young man's ardour had somewhat subsided. Françoise, taking up her new rôle as a young matron, most enthusiastically had allowed her mind to be much occupied by thoughts of arranging the home and attending to her new duties. She had scarcely noticed the lessening tenderness of her husband, for he had ever showed himself solicitous of her health and comfort.

Anxious to teach her many things concerning her social and home duties, he appeared more in the light of a friendly guide than an amorous husband. He suggested to her how she must dress to please him, and how to receive his friends in his own house. He told her what visits she must make to the ladies of the town—wives of his various colleagues in the State Administrations—explaining to her how usefully a wife could serve her husband's ambitions by the graciousness of her social manners. He guided her taste in all things, and she loved him as a teacher as well as a husband. When at times the ardour of their first married weeks seemed to return to him, she found in him again the lover, and was perfectly happy and content.

During their life together never for a moment had

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Françoise doubted her husband's love for her, and even his sincere affection for their little daughter seemed to have increased his feeling of tender solicitude for his wife. But now she knew that she had been living in a fool's paradise all the years of her marriage, and that her temple of love was crumbled in the dust!

From the effects of the stunning blow of sudden knowledge Françoise's mind emerged from its chrysalid state of artificial modesty, of artificial virtue, and of artificial ideals which had been the result of her conventional training. She found her own soul for the first time, and stood revealed to herself. She felt that henceforth she should resolve the problems of life with her own judgment, and no longer with the atrophied judgment of others, given to her brain second hand with its true essence altered. She realized that she must now do away entirely with the false education of life which her parents, in the fond hope of defending her against evil, had built up for her. Her natural intelligence now asserted itself completely, bursting through the new-born outward husk of convention.

At first she was astonished to find that she was thinking her own individual thoughts, and was almost bewildered at her own audacity. But once the movement was set in action, she knew that she was going to find in herself a new individuality—her real self—which her convent education, her parents, her surroundings, and finally her husband, had all helped to suppress. She learned in a flash that she did possess

an individuality of her very own—though she had never suspected its existence until now. Making this discovery almost instantaneously, fresh thoughts began at once to force themselves into her brain, crushing out all her old effete convictions.

After the terrible hours of that first night of knowledge she was never the same creature again. What proved her complete transformation to herself was the fact that she found herself instinctively making a supreme effort in the midst of her suffering and desolation to examine the situation dispassionately without personal prejudice, even without resentment, setting aside her own feelings and trying to judge with calm reason and forbearance. She thrust aside personal jealousy with valiant endeavour to try to understand the soul, the promptings, and the consequent misery of such a woman as Cécile Ducastel.

From Madame Ducastel's letters, Françoise had gathered all that Adrien had represented in this unhappy woman's life. The tone of sincerity in these long missives had convinced her. She had veered round in her appreciation of Cécile by putting herself in imagination in Cécile's place, and judging her as she would have wished to be judged herself—that is to say, not only without harshness, but with some commiseration. Yes, Cécile, wrong though she was, had sincerely loved Adrien—loved him, not for herself, but for himself—loved him, not for her good, her own happiness, but for his. That was the truth that touched Françoise, because by comparison it taught her how thoughtless, how childish, and how

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egotistical her own love for Adrien had been, and therefore how much weaker, more trivial a thing.

Cécile had done much for Adrien. She had given him herself, but she had also been his adviser, his comrade, his true friend. By means of her womanly knowledge and wider experience, she had helped him to build up his social and economic position. And then later she had sacrificed herself, nobly, willingly, to his material interests. It was not merely to dupe her husband that she had manœuvred and planned to obtain for him the post that he occupied. That was quite clear to understand in all her letters. It was really because she knew it was for Adrien's benefit. Françoise realized all these things now and her freed intelligence confirmed her instinctive convictions.

When Adrien had married, Cécile had really renounced him. That had been quite evident. Her letter of farewell had been heartbreaking, and its ring of sincerity unmistakeably true. If she had found no strength left in her when Adrien had implored her to give herself back after his first visit to Paris when he had settled down in Rouen, Cécile's new guilt had filled her with remorse, and all through the letters which followed one another at short intervals during this period Françoise had been able to trace the various phases of suffering through which the miserable woman had passed. Alternatives of frenzied passion, of frozen despair, of bitter, cruel remorse and regret, succeeded one another. And yet through all this there was the often-ex-

pressed wish that Adrien should act fairly, decently, honourably, to his young wife. Françoise understood that at times Adrien must have rebelled against his legal chains and with the lack of reticence and reserve which characterised him in his most intimate relations, confided his revolt to Cécile. For her letters were full of exhortations to patience, to kindness, to consideration for the mother of his child. And Françoise dimly realized now that much of Adrien's forbearance with what must have often seemed to him her own childish petulant ignorance had been the result of Cécile's gentle influence over him. Truly a disenchanting discovery for any young wife to make, and sufficient in itself to crush out any lingering feeling of tenderness for a husband's memory!

And what excuse could be conscientiously found for Adrien? None. Though Françoise herself, had been carefully prepared by her mother for her subservient rôle as a wife, she had joyfully accepted the suitor her parents offered her, and had hoped that marriage would bring, not only love and passion, but also the realisation of her dreams. Now she knew that the very foundation of her union with Adrien Réville had been laid upon a misunderstanding. But if, in her girlish ignorance of life, she had expected love and passion in marriage, what Adrien had sought was the forgetting of passion, and the calm affection one has for a comrade. She had entered upon the contract with the hope of beginning her experience and he with the intention of closing his. Adrien rea-

soned, like most young men of his time, and, as Françoise now realized, the man of Latin races does not marry for love, but to put an end to what has often been a passionate youth, to settle down to make a home and found a family. And when he does this, he preferably seeks appointment to some secure and reliable post in the State system—for these posts confer upon their holders a social standing and a dignity to which all Frenchmen alike aspire, once they have sown their wild oats. But Government posts having comparatively small salaries attached to them, candidates must seek a wife whose dowry represents not only her own share in the community, but more also, so as to supplement the salary of her husband and pay for the luxuries which the husband's position demands.

Françoise knew all these things. She knew that most legal unions in her country were social arrangements by means of which the importance of the husband's position justified the demanding of a certain figure for his wife's dowry.

She had heard such alliances discussed often among her friends and acquaintances during her married life. But because she had not realized it at the time, there was no reason why Adrien's own marriage should have been differently arranged. Once her education finished, her parents had sought and found her a husband exactly on the same principle as other parents. They had relied upon the information gathered from intermediates, for they knew nothing more about Adrien than what the Dumonts

had told them. But they had faith in the judgment of their old friends, who had known Adrien's father long before the birth of Adrien himself. Françoise knew that as a matter of course her parents had presented Adrien Réville as a possible suitor only after they had entirely satisfied themselves as to his honourableness and social position. Of his character, his temperament, his tastes and inclinations, they of course knew nothing, nor could they learn anything from the Dumonts, who had only seen Adrien himself twice.

But in their opinion it would be their daughter's duty to discover these tendencies after she had married him, and to adapt herself to them. That was the reason of her education in entire passivity, for Françoise's own education, like that of all her young companions, had been but a long preparation for marriage and for a husband's guidance. Her parents had told her that she must study his tastes exclusively, and obey him in all things. She had done so, and he had exercised the same moral tutelage over her heart and brain that her parents had exercised since her babyhood. And until now she had found no fault in him, had discovered no flaw in his character. He was to her the master who must be loved and obeyed.

But with her new soul a stern judgment had arisen strong within her. And this so-well hidden *liaison* proved not only his deep hypocritical treachery to herself but also to Cécile. For there had been hours in her married life that Françoise now remembered in which Adrien's passion for herself had been indubitable. Certain *abandons* cannot be feigned, and even

the most innocent woman recognises true passion in its hour. His twofold insincerity now revealed him completely to his wife—and she was able to judge him calmly, passionlessly, mercilessly. But—and it was not vacillation but a stern resolve to be just and impartial in her judgment of Adrien—were not all young men brought up to believe that they had a right to take the love of women when it was offered to them? While she herself and so many others had been reared in total ignorance of life, and prepared like lambs for the slaughter and for the selfishness of men, were not young men themselves allowed all licence?

Thus did she come to see that the true cause of this tragedy must be sought and found in her own ignorance. Therein lay the great, the unpardonable error. Though she was twenty-two years of age, she had known nothing of life when she married. And Adrien had chosen her perhaps from among many others precisely because of her complete ignorance. She understood why now. It was because he knew that she would be the easier to deceive. And this amazing, truth-revealing discovery she had just made was largely the result of her own innocence and ignorance.

That night was Françoise's Gethsemane. In her long, lonely vigil she found in herself certain mental qualities she had never supposed that she possessed. She discovered that she had decision, for which she had hitherto had no use since others had directed her life, her thoughts, and her actions. And through the

process of her own awakening, she realized that now in her heart there were pity and commiseration for other women—above all, for the one woman who, though guilty, had been so entirely sincere in her love for the man whom she must have known only too well, and to whose egotism she had yet sacrificed herself.

But after her sudden comprehension of the truth, Françoise understood, too, that although she had gained knowledge she had lost all hope of personal happiness for ever.

Though she had found in herself the strength to look at facts face to face, and accept them as they were, she knew that she would not be able to find the necessary power of recuperation to build up for herself any new dream of happiness. Though the sapping forces of her false education had not so completely exhausted the strength of her vitality as to prevent her re-creating a new conscience for herself, they had at least frustrated all possibility of her forging for herself a new soul, with strong, ardent beliefs and eager aspirations. If mentally she was still capable of accepting other and new convictions and of living up to them so that they might help her to build up new ideals, she felt herself for ever incapable of feeling new emotions. The very springs of passion in her had been suddenly dried up.

She had been a betrayed wife, and such she would ever remain. To this she was now resigned. She knew she would never find in herself the power to believe in love again. . . . 'All chances of per-

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sonal felicity for her were for ever destroyed. She would live on and perhaps find a certain quiet pleasure in the living of each new day in freedom—but the only real joy she could ever feel now would come to her from her child. . . . Jacqueline at least should not fail her. Above all, Jacqueline should not be deluded and betrayed as her mother had been. Whatever character her child might develop later on, her mother would not allow her to become the victim of such false ethics as those upon which she herself had been reared. All the conventional fabric of her own false education should be thrust deliberately out of her own mind so that Jacqueline's mind should not be tainted with it. The very foundations of her own convictions should be overthrown and she would build up for herself the temple of a new and personal philosophy which she would teach Jacqueline, so that her daughter might defend herself when the need should come to her for self-defence. The education of Jacqueline should be diametrically opposed to the education which she had herself received. The girl should be allowed to acquire knowledge—scientific and practical—so that she might form her own judgments and base them upon true facts. The mysteries of life should be explained to her clearly and cleanly. She should not be duped into learning them when too late to avoid the responsibilities they brought with them. Her daughter should not be trained to become that artificial product of a decadent civilisation—*la jeune fille bien élevée*—as she herself had been, and which had been the parental ideal of her time. Jacqueline

should be forewarned, therefore forearmed, and so would be able to defend herself. She should know and understand men, so as not to be their victim. She should be taught to see them as they are—with all their bad, as well as their good qualities. And to that end Françoise promised herself that even from Jacqueline's very girlhood she would encourage her daughter's friendships with young men. She should be free and independent, and should be enabled to form her own judgment of facts so as to possess not only the mere reflection of the judgments of others. She would teach her daughter to see life as it is, would encourage enquiry, instead of repelling it or falsely contenting it with specious lies. Above all she would educate her child's brain, perhaps even at the expense of her heart, rather than allow her to become a victim of her own false sentimentality. And Françoise vowed to herself as she listened to the babe's regular breathing that Jacqueline should never be the credulous victim of an unscrupulous husband as she herself had been.

As the dawn filtered through the curtains, Françoise arose. She was a new creature—her mind fully alert, her convictions re-built. She almost forgot her sorrow in the proud, conscious knowledge of her newly-awakened soul.

She bent over the rails of the cot, and looked at her sleeping child. Yes, Jacqueline was like her father! But now Françoise no longer rejoiced in the fact. On the contrary, all her faith in Adrien and all her regard for his character having disappeared at

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once, she feared that similarity of feature would indicate similarity of character. She trembled with apprehension as she looked at Jacqueline and wondered what the child's future would be. As she knelt by the side of the cot, instinctively her eyes were lifted to the white ivory crucifix above the babe's head. And gazing upon it—at first vacantly—there came into her eyes a look of wonder, of doubt, of incomprehension.

For the first time in her life, as she gazed upon the Divine image, her heart was unappeased and held no reverence, no awe, only a strange and angry revolt. Having lost her faith in humanity, was she about to lose her faith in Divinity too? For had not Christ founded the Church, and had not the Church enforced submission? Had not the whole of her false feminine education been built upon the dogma of that Catholic Faith which enforces submission and subservience upon woman? Had not her education, built upon the foundation of the Catholic Faith, made of her a dupe and a victim? And was even the consolation of the Church to be only a hollow mockery for her now that her dreams of love and faith had faded? And yet another thought came into her mind. Ought she to teach Jacqueline that doctrine of submission, of blind self-sacrifice? No—a thousand times, no! prompted the fierce revolt in her heart, in answer to her mute question to herself. . . .

She closed her eyes, and bitter hot tears fell from beneath her eyelids. Must she lose everything at the same time, and with all her hopes even the deep comfort of her religious faith? Yet, when she looked

on the figure of the Divine Crucified, she felt neither comfort nor solace. She tried to pray, but she could not. Though all her soul was uplifted in the divine exaltation which in itself is prayer, she dared not frame the words of Christian humility which are those of the Church. Though she tried again and again to murmur an invocation of supreme appeal that was not the prayer of dogma, no words came welling up from her heart. She opened her eyes wide as if seeking to find Truth itself incarnate, and, lifting her head, her gaze fell once more upon the gleaming cross. Rapidly and without reflection, acting only upon her impulses, she thrust forth an impious hand and tore it down from the wall.

At the roughness of her cruel gesture, the babe turned and murmured in her sleep, as if in protest. For a few awful moments Françoise gazed upon her child in frenzied terror! Had some Divine power urged her little one to oppose her mother's action in that moment of her supreme rebellion? Or in her great stress had her own poor feverish brain become demented? She recoiled with horror of her own action, and bending her face penitently over the sacred image, as the cold chill of its ivory touched her burning cheeks she felt suddenly subdued, soothed, comforted, and her fingers closed over it with tenderness and reverence once more.

And then she knew that her habit of piety and worship was still stronger in her even than her newborn will and revolt. For her veneration was conscious now, and therefore more true, more real.

She bent over the crucifix and gently, religiously, kissed the pallid image which had meant so much to her in former days, and still meant so much, though she had tried to tear it from her heart. Then gently and reverentially she placed it back again in its place over the child's cot. No, she would not destroy her faith willingly. She would not allow her rebellion against her own fate to kill it. For her own sake and for Jacqueline's sake she would retain at least that one precious gift of her early education. For to Jacqueline should not be denied the consolation of Faith in the Divine, if later on she felt the need of it. The mother would teach her child to love, and to adore the Divine Master. . . .

And François once more threw herself upon her knees, and, closing her eyes, now allowed eager words of prayer to gush forth from her tortured heart. For hours she remained there, imploring Christ to inspire her with the courage to renounce all human passion for ever, so that she might save all her strength for her devotion to her child, and so be able to bring up her Jacqueline to a safer and more conscious happiness than her own had been.

And all through the night Françoise prayed—prayed—prayed.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Françoise rose from her knees her limbs were cold and stiff, and her face pale and determined. Her new resolves were strong within her. She put all disquieting thoughts resolutely aside and as she dressed herself she settled in her mind what her day's work was to be. There were many things to be attended to—the packing and arranging of furniture and clothes, the classing and sorting of old letters, which was not yet quite finished, and the making of her final preparations for her departure from Rouen.

Françoise had decided to take the train up to Paris that same afternoon to choose the papers for the flat she had taken near the Place Wagram, where she intended settling with Jacqueline and Clémence in about a fortnight's time. All through the days which had followed her husband's death, she had bitterly regretted that Pomm was not in France, near her, to help her with his advice. But, alone with her new conscience now, she rejoiced that she was able to act independently. The fact of being obliged by circumstances to make her own decisions increased her vigour of mind.

When baby Jacqueline awoke, Françoise lifted her from her cot, and proceeded to wash and dress her, and after she had spent two hours in performing her

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household duties and tending her child, she sat down once more at the writing-desk in her room. While Jacqueline played on the floor beside her, she drew all Madame Ducastel's letters out of the drawer they filled, including the one which had arrived by post the night before, and, carrying the three packets they formed to the grate of the room, she set fire to them. At least half of her dead husband's instructions would thus have been executed.

The great mass of paper made a huge bonfire in the grate and Jacqueline, attracted by the glow of the sparks, left her playthings and came and stood by her mother's side as Françoise knelt by the grate.

"*Joli—joli!*" murmured the child as she held out her tiny palms to the warmth of the fire.

But Françoise, in silence watching the red flames lick around each violet envelope in turn, paid no heed to her daughter's remarks, though she had instinctively thrown her arm around the little tottering figure to save it from a too dangerous proximity to the blaze. Several letters were unbound and the words written incisively on their blackened pages stood out in red relief. Here and there whole sentences could be clearly read. The words "*Mon bien aimé*" occurred often, and seemed to mock at Françoise as she gazed. . . .

"*Le joli feu!—le joli feu!*" murmured the child again and her glee made the mother shiver as the crimson incandescent words glowed and paled among the charred cinders—"Mon bien aimé—mon bien aimé." . . .

"*Ah! Maman, regarde le beau feu!*" persisted Jacqueline in her sweet lisping tones, astonished at her mother's lack of sympathy.

The leaping, burning tongues had spent their passion on the senseless paper ashes now and yet Françoise was silent.

When the last flames had died away, Jacqueline turned to her mother, a note of regret in her piping voice. "*Oh! Maman, le beau feu . . . il est mort!*"

Suddenly Françoise turned fiercely towards her child, and, catching up the soft warm little body, strained her to her heart.

"Yes, my darling . . . the fire is dead, dead—dead! And everything else too is dead now—dead—quite dead—except you—my precious sweet!" And, kissing the child passionately, she set her back on to her feet.

After the last shreds of paper had been consumed, Françoise still sat patiently gazing by the side of the grate, though Jacqueline had taken up her toys again and was playing at the other end of the room. She began once more to think of Cécile Ducastel. . . . What sort of woman was this, she asked herself, whose last cry of appeal and despair had had such power to rouse her own slumbering heart and soul? For Françoise was bound to admit to herself now—after her night of profound perplexity and final realization of self—that she felt far less resentment towards Cécile than towards Adrien. For Cécile had had claims that were prior even to her own; she

therefore merited both her respect and her consideration.

She had begun to understand all that this woman, who had known and loved Adrien for so long, must be suffering now in her suspense and fear. For Françoise, enriched by her newer, conscious knowledge, had reached the depths of humility and frankly owned to herself that the mistress's love had been far greater than hers and of a nobler kind. Long ago Cécile must have measured the meanness of Adrien's shallow soul, and yet she had continued giving him royally of her love and generous devotion. Such tenderness was a far greater thing than her own ignorant feeling for her husband, born merely of the promptings of her own youth. . . . Yes, Cécile ought to be told of Adrien's death and told gently and with consideration. That thought thrust itself into Françoise's mind most convincingly. Madame Ducastel must no longer be left in cruel ignorance and suspense. And again and again Françoise asked herself how was she to be told?

Françoise's first impulse was to write to her, but she soon relinquished that idea. If the letter were delivered to Madame Ducastel in the presence of her husband, she might, in the shock of learning the terrible news, betray her emotion before him, and so in a moment ruin the whole edifice of her deception so carefully and so successfully manœuvred for ten years.

Not that Françoise approved Madame Ducastel's conduct in deceiving her husband. The prejudices of

the *petite bourgeoisie* were dying hard within her, and her recoil from the unfaithful wife was still very strong. But all her ideas and sentiments had been so violently upheaved within the past twenty-four hours that at this moment her sense of pity was almost out of proportion to any other—even her sense of rectitude. Indeed, the rude overthrowing of her own ideals had left her with so softened a heart that momentarily her ideas of right and wrong were blunted. She was determined to spare the poor woman the cruel blow of learning the truth in so brusque a manner as by means of a letter. Someone must tell her gently, with feeling, with some care and some pity. She must not be brutally informed of an event which would mean so much to her. But who could go to Madame Ducastel for her? There was no one she could send.

And then suddenly it came to her that she herself—Françoise—should go and see her and acquaint her with the truth, telling her gently and kindly, as one woman who has suffered can speak to another who has gone through deep tribulation. The idea that she, so used to the domination of others, would dare to do so unusual a thing as to go and acquaint the mistress of her own husband with the news of his death, at first appalled her by its audacity. But it gradually grew upon her. Who could tell what had first suggested this thought? Was it merely the natural curiosity which a woman feels to see the woman who is her rival in her husband's affections? Hardly that, for Françoise had already travelled far beyond mere

physical jealousy, and she could not feel moral jealousy since she now realized that she had never been her husband's true companion, and had never even shared his thoughts! Then if the almost irresistible feeling, which prompted her to go herself to see Cécile, and to speak with her, was based upon neither curiosity nor jealousy, what was the strange appeal that the thought of Madame Ducastel's distress made to her heart? . . . Was it an impulse of divine generosity that led her to sympathize with the miserable woman, or was it merely her sense of human justice? She would not have been able to define exactly what she felt for Cécile, but at least she was able to persuade herself that she had no feeling of either rivalry or jealousy against the woman who had loved Adrien long before she herself had known him—and, long too after she—Cécile—had realised his baseness.

She soon made up her mind to take this unconventional step; and her decision was irrevocable. No one could have deterred her or persuaded her from doing what she wished. By her deep search into her own motives, and by the convictions concerning her own heart and soul that she had acquired in her process of enquiry, Françoise was by degrees becoming acquainted with the unknown individuality in herself hitherto entirely unsuspected by her.

At the time of her marriage, Françoise had often heard Adrien speak of the Ducastels. But she had never seen them and indeed had never heard of them since those days. For Adrien had been careful to

avoid reference to them so as not to arouse his young wife's suspicions. He had mentioned the fact to her some time after his marriage—and quite casually—that his appointment at the *Perception* had been obtained by Monsieur Ducastel, and that afterwards the Deputy and his wife had left Paris to live in the south of France. This had disposed of them easily.

Françoise therefore, ignoring their address, had not sent them the formal intimation of her husband's death. To her mind, until now, both husband and wife were merely people Adrien had known when in Paris, and with whom he had been sufficiently friendly for Ducastel to wish to further his interests. But the engraved heading of some of the letters within recent date showed Françoise that Cécile Ducastel still occupied the same *hôtel* in the Place Malesherbes which Adrien had mentioned to her as the former residence of his friends.

So she decided to go there this very afternoon after she had accomplished her business in Paris. In taking this resolution, she firmly believed that there was no other thought in her mind but that of acting charitably towards Madame Ducastel, who, like herself, was a victim of Adrien's most selfish interests. She felt no resentment against her—no hatred—no contempt. She was not even consciously actuated by any natural curiosity to see "the other woman" in the life of the man she had loved.

For she no longer loved Adrien. Her tenderness for him, based upon a false conception of his character, had fallen from her heart. She only felt now

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that divine quality of sympathy which teaches love and urges forgiveness, and which cannot exist in company with hatred or jealousy, or even vulgar curiosity. She had made a stupendous effort to put away any harsh or severe judgment, and she had now succeeded, since she was able to view the situation from its loftiest and most philosophical standpoint. She intended to go to Madame Ducastel, to tell her the truth gently, to comfort her if necessary, but never to reveal to her that she knew her so long guarded secret.

But before she started on the way to perform her errand of mercy, she thought of the effect it might have in all its aspects in the mind of both Madame Ducastel and her husband. What excuse was she going to give to explain her visit to two people whom she had never seen? And then the memory of Monsieur Ducastel's former kindness to Adrien came to her aid. It would be quite natural that the young widow of Adrien Réville, discovering the address of her husband's old friends among his papers a month after his death, should go and see them herself and tell them the sad news. Indeed, outwardly she owed some consideration to the man who had obtained Adrien's post for him.

It was half-past two when Françoise rang the bell at the door of Number 220 Place Malesherbes.

She chose this hour because she knew that Monsieur Ducastel, being an important member of the Chamber of Deputies, would be at his duty in the House at this moment, and that thus her interview with Cécile would be undisturbed. Madame Ducastel

could explain the visit to her husband afterwards as she liked.

A man servant answered her ring. To her inquiry, he replied that Madame Ducastel was at home, though she was just dressing to go out and he could not affirm that she would "receive." Françoise explained that she came on urgent business, and wrote her name on a slip of paper which the man offered her, for she had purposely not brought her visiting-card, which was deeply edged with black, according to the custom of French widows. A few moments later the servant returned and said that Madame would receive her, and Françoise was shown into a small *salon* on the ground floor that communicated with a larger *salon* by means of a wide double door that was now closed.

As she entered the room, her glance fell at once upon a photograph of her husband. It was framed in a small enamel frame and set upon the diminutive bureau that occupied one corner of the room. Françoise stood before it and gazed at it for several moments. She had never seen this particular picture before. It was an old portrait, and represented a much younger-looking Adrien than she had ever known, with an immature countenance and a budding moustache. The expression was smiling and winning. It was the face of a man who would attract many women and be greatly beloved by one or two. Françoise sighed as she looked at it. It seemed to her as if it were the picture of a stranger or of a person whom she had not seen for years and had almost forgotten. She had travelled so far along the road of

knowledge and experience since the day before, that she felt aloof from all that had been part and parcel of her late husband. Yet she felt some emotion, here in this small room with its dim soft light and luxurious furnishing, as one always feels when one stands upon the spot where a great love has passed by. . . .

Here Adrien and Cécile had evidently often met, and loved, and vowed the eternal vow of all lovers. It seemed strange to her—yet Françoise could not throw off a feeling of personal detachment, and it seemed to her almost as if she were trespassing here in this warm boudoir. Wide and luxurious divans stretched along the walls, *bibelots* of silver and china were dispersed everywhere, alternating with fancy frames containing the photographs of friends, amongst which was the picture of Adrien.

A soft rustling sound caused Françoise to look round. Cécile Ducastel stood in the doorway. She was a much older woman than Françoise had expected to see, and her face looked haggard and drawn, as if anxiety and weeping had greatly altered its natural charm.

She made a visible effort to look impassible—but to one who knew the anxiety at her heart, the signs of her deep emotion were evident in the only half-subdued quivering of her delicate nostrils and the trembling of her mobile lips. She was a tall, lithe creature, slim—yet not too thin. Her *coiffure* was somewhat elaborate and conventional, but her fair hair was still luxuriant, although many silver threads ran

through it. Her large blue-grey eyes were beautiful and clear, but held so deep an expression of baffled hope—of sad, yet tender memories—that Françoise's heart was drawn to her in still greater sympathy than before. But she remained immobile, and waited for Madame Ducastel to speak first.

Cécile paused on the threshold as she entered, paused because of the sudden terror at her heart, for, seeing Françoise dressed in the deep pointed shawl and long black crape veil of French widows, she had received a terrible shock. Yet she dared not tell herself what was the fear that clutched at her heart. So she stood motionless, gazing vacantly, yet with a nameless terror filling her eyes as she looked upon her visitor and driving away the natural delicate tints of her face, leaving her ghastly white. Françoise in her shrouding garments stood motionless too—waiting.

Then Madame Ducastel, urging aside all her fears, made a tremendous effort and advanced towards her with the outstretched hand and conventional smile of the society hostess suddenly achieved.

"*Chère madame!* to what good fortune do I owe the pleasure of this unexpected visit?"

Françoise pressed the hand held out to her, and did not relinquish it immediately. She was very pale, and her face wore no smile, though her eyes were soft.

"*Hélas, madame!* it is no good fortune but bad fortune which brings me to you."

"What is it?" gasped Cécile. She understood now

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and strong agony gripped her heart, followed immediately by a supreme instinctive effort to hide her feelings from her visitor. She knew what Françoise's next words would be before she uttered them, but was in terror at the thought of hearing them expressed. She closed her eyes instinctively, as with a gesture of invitation she motioned to Françoise to sit down on the divan beside her—conscious only of the one fact that Françoise was Adrien's wife, and that she must not betray herself. She bent her head and motioned again to Françoise to continue speaking. And Françoise, putting her hand gently upon Cécile's wrist, spoke.

"My husband died a month ago, *madame*. I have come to tell you this sad news myself—because I know what affection you and your husband once had for him—as he had for you."

For a few seconds, which seemed æons of time, there was silence between the two women. Cécile was battling against her emotion, yet was making a valiant effort to hide her feelings from Françoise. She tried to simulate the attitude of an old friend who learns of the death of a young man to whom she has been attached as a friend, and nothing more. She strove with all her might to stave back the ineffable agony which strained her bosom, bidding herself wait until in the solitude of her closed room she might give way to her despair.

Françoise meanwhile sat by her side, apparently unmoved, though in reality deeply touched. She knew at once by her attitude that Cécile believed her

to be entirely ignorant of her own relations with Adrien.

"You must excuse me, *madame*, but this is a great shock to me," said Cécile at last, pressing Françoise's hand which still lay on her arm. "I knew your poor husband when he was almost a lad. I had been interested in his career for many years. . . . Sudden death is always so tragic. . . ." And Cécile let the tears unrepressed flow down her cheeks.

"Yes, *madame*, I know, I know," said Françoise, and she drew nearer and threw her arms around Madame Ducastel's shoulders, pressing her to her heart as if to comfort the miserable woman in her despair. "Adrien often spoke to me of you and your husband with affection and gratitude, and I wanted to tell you the dreadful news myself so that it should not come to you unexpectedly by letter."

Cécile again bowed her head, and bade her heart stand still. Then she spoke, but she hardly recognised her own voice.

"How did it happen?"

"He caught a chill on his way home from Paris last month when he came up to see the Minister," replied Françoise.

She was determined to betray none of her knowledge to Cécile, and repeated Adrien's oft-told conventional lie herself as if she really believed it.

Cécile reflected. Then he had died only a few days after he had last left her!

She closed her eyes once more.

Then suddenly she turned and looked at Françoise.

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She remembered that she was Adrien's widow, and again she resolved to put away her own sorrow as if forgetting it entirely, letting it bide its time. She in her turn put her hand impulsively on Françoise's shoulder and looked her straight in the face.

"You poor, poor girl! What will you do alone in the world with your child now?"

For she had heard much about Françoise through Adrien, who had told her that his wife had been most carefully and conventionally trained, and that she was incapable of managing her own affairs.

"I hope I shall have enough strength and fortitude to do my duty and to bring up my daughter alone," she replied with some dignity.

Cécile was astonished to find Françoise so different from what Adrien had represented her to be. She could not guess the tragedy which had suddenly transformed the woman before her, and Françoise was determined to make every effort that she should never know.

"Poor, poor Adrien!" murmured Cécile. Her mind had reverted again to her sorrow against her will. "He was so young—so full of life—and of the joy of life!"

She restrained her tears and, pointing to the portrait of Adrien which Françoise had first noticed: "There is his portrait, when we first knew him. He was about twenty-five then. Such a beautiful creature, full of vitality and eagerness to live and to be happy!"

Françoise made no reply. She gazed upon the

portrait in silence. But no tears came to her eyes, and Cécile, looking upon her impassibility, said to herself that Adrien had been quite right when he had told her that his wife was not a woman of feeling.

Then Françoise rose to go. There was no more to be said between them. She understood the constraint that Cécile was putting upon herself and longed to get away and leave the wretched woman alone.

"Then what have you decided to do?" asked Cécile again, as she rose also and stood before Françoise. She framed the words mechanically for mere politeness' sake, because inwardly she was hoping—desperately—that this mute widow would go and leave her alone, so that she might give herself up to her tears.

"I am going to take a small flat in Paris and live with my daughter, *madame*. I have no relations, no friends. Will you please give my regards to Monsieur Ducastel, and tell him that I came myself to tell you the sad news, because I knew that Adrien owed so much to him?"

As Cécile, half dazed by the sorrow against which she fought so hard, made no answer, Françoise continued: "I must now take my train back to Rouen. Good-bye, *madame*."

"But can't I do anything for you—you poor child?" urged Madame Ducastel again, forcing herself to speak. "My husband is very powerful. He might be able to be of use to you in some way. There

are certain privileges for which the widows of high functionaries may apply to the State—if necessary. . . . You must surely need some help or some advice, even if you do not require pecuniary aid. . . .”

“Oh, no—no—no, *madame!* Do not speak so, I beg you. I could not accept anything—morally or materially—from anyone,” cried Françoise with such sudden fervour that Cécile Ducastel stepped back imperceptibly and looked at her visitor in surprise. And Françoise added with more self possession: “You are very kind, but I want nothing and shall not ask for any help from the *Administration*. I have sufficient means of my own. My own dowry brings me in an income that will be ample for me to live on. It is good of you to suggest helping me. But I can accept no assistance.”

The dignity and the proud attitude of Françoise at once impressed Cécile with a respect she never thought she would feel for the characterless girl whom she had formerly advised her lover to marry, only because of her large dowry.

And Françoise, not waiting for Madame Ducastel to ring for the servant, pressed Cécile’s hand again with sympathy and passed lightly out of the room alone and through the hall, closing the street-door gently behind her.

CHAPTER IV

ON Jacqueline's seventh birthday, Pomm, who had now taken his pension and was definitively settled in Paris, came to lunch, to celebrate the event, at the small flat where Françoise and her daughter had been living for the past three years. To-day was a doubly interesting occasion, for that morning, for the first time, Jacqueline had solemnly entered the portals of the Lycée Racine as a pupil.

"Seven years old! It is the age of reason, my dear," said old Pomm affectionately, as Jacqueline came up to him to be kissed and congratulated. She lifted her flowerlike face to his with spontaneous affection, and her golden curls were merged for an instant into the silver of his grey beard.

"Oh, I'm sure I'm very reasonable, as *Maman* will tell you, Uncle Pomm. Am I not?" she said, turning to her mother, who, smiling, nodded a rather dubious answer.

"I went to the Lycée this morning," volunteered Jacqueline to Pomm. "It was rather amusing. There are thirty girls in my class, and the mistress is very kind and not a bit strict. . . ."

"What lessons did you do this morning, my dear?" asked Pomm.

"We learned some English. I recited 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' better than any of the others. They all pronounce English very badly in my class!"

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"Indeed!" said Pomm. "But it's not astonishing if you speak better English than most of your companions. . . . You must not forget that I taught you to recite and sing English nursery rhymes when you were almost a baby."

"Yes, that's true," answered Jacqueline simply. She spoke correctly and precisely, selecting her words carefully and more like a grown-up person than like a child.

She was standing in front of Pomm, with her face towards his, and, resting her hands upon his parted knees, she amused herself by raising herself up and down several times. Suddenly her bobbing head struck a sharp blow underneath Pomm's chin.

The old mariner rubbed the sore spot ruefully, but said nothing. The child had stopped her acrobatic movements and stood waiting to see if he would speak.

"You've hurt Pomm, you naughty monkey!" said Françoise rising hurriedly, and going towards her little daughter. "See, you've hurt him very much with your romping. But he is too good to say so."

"Oh, a little knock like that won't hurt him, *Maman chérie*," quoth Jacqueline. "He's a man; he can bear it."

Both Pomm and Françoise looked at Jacqueline, trying to appear severe. But both were doing their utmost to refrain from laughing.

"You might at least apologize to Uncle Pomm," said Françoise at last.

"Oh, certainly," said Jacqueline, and she moved towards Pomm, and, stroking his hand, kissed him

gently on one cheek. "Poor old Pomm! I didn't hurt you really, did I?"

"No, not much," said Pomm. And he smiled and kissed her back again.

"There, you see!" said Jacqueline triumphantly to her mother. "I told you he didn't mind." Although it was Françoise's aim to suppress in her child's heart all over-sensibility that might be the means of suffering for her later on in life, there were times when she was almost appalled at her own handiwork, and Jacqueline's incipient heartlessness terrified her. She looked at the child almost with terror. But faithful to her resolved principles, she allowed a sterner reason to get the better of her more natural instincts and she did not chide Jacqueline for her lack of feeling.

Having got the best of her mother, which she nearly always did on such occasions, Jacqueline turned her attention once more to Pomm and said sweetly: "What have you got for my birthday, Uncle Pomm—eh?"

"If you go out into the hall, and fetch a parcel that is lying by the side of my hat and coat, you will see," said Pomm.

And Jacqueline flew.

"You see what she is like, *mon ami*," said Françoise to Pomm. "I can never get the better of her, and yet, even when she knows she is in the wrong, she disarms me at once with her wilful charm. She is terribly like her father in some ways. I am appalled at times, yet I feel powerless to prevent it."

"Why should you try to prevent it, dear friend?"

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"Because I do so hope that Jacqueline will be upright, straightforward, and sincere. I have suffered so much retrospectively, when I have thought of Adrien's charm and remembered how he used to put it to the service of his most selfish desires when he wished to gain some benefit. He knew the power of his winning ways, and he used them consciously as a weapon to his own ends. I see signs of the same characteristic traits in Jacqueline, and they appal me. You see how she wheedled you just now!"

"Yes, she is a winsome sprite," said Pomm, smiling. Pomm's philosophy led him to accept character as it was, and not to try and amend it in any way. "I should not trouble about those childish little ruses if I were you. You cannot educate a creature merely with reason. Let her develop along her own lines, and correct what you think absolutely wrong as you go along. The best educationalist cannot do more than that."

"Yes, but she frightens me sometimes with her hard common-sense too," said Françoise. "Only the other day I was giving her a music lesson, and she would not pay attention. So I left her alone in the drawing-room, telling her that I should not come back to her until she had made up her mind to give all her energies to her work. Thereupon systematically she set up a dismal howling, which she *would not* stop. After about a quarter of an hour of such exercise, I opened the door and said to her: 'It is perfectly useless to go on howling like that, Jacqueline. You know very well that it does not appeal to me at all.'

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Thereupon she suddenly stopped. 'Doesn't it move you, then?' she asked. 'Not in the least,' I answered. Then she took out her pocket-handkerchief and dried her eyes. And quite calmly she said: 'Well, as it doesn't affect you, I need not go on.'"

Pomm laughed immoderately at this story.

"Oh, don't laugh, Pomm—please don't," said Françoise with some vexation. "Do tell me what I ought to do when she says such things."

"Well, what did you say in this particular instance?"

"Nothing. I left the room and closed the door, trying hard not to laugh. But in reality I was terribly vexed with myself."

"My dear friend! You may be educating Jacqueline, and I am sure that you are doing your best. But what is certainly achieved so far, is that Jacqueline is educating *you*!"

"What is the use of your friendship, Pomm, if you can't say more useful things than that?" began Françoise hotly, when Jacqueline came skipping back into the room with a new doll which she had managed to extricate from the parcel that Pomm had brought her. It was dressed as a sailor-boy.

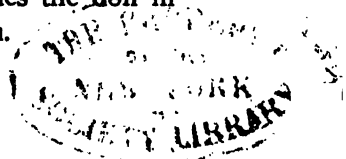
"I'm glad it's a boy-doll," said Jacqueline. "I've got three lady-dolls and they'll keep him in order—like *Maman* and I do you," she said, turning to Pomm.

This was her only mode of thanks.

"Didn't you find anything else besides the doll in that parcel, Jacqueline?" asked Pomm.

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"Oh, yes," replied Jacqueline casually. "Yes, I found an old dirty book too. But I left it in the hall . . . I thought it was for *Maman*." She ran out into the hall again, and returned shortly with the book in her hand. "There!" she said, giving it to her mother. "It's hardly worth having. It's so old and nasty."

Françoise opened it, glanced at it, and saw that it was a work on the Education of Woman by Gréard.

"I found that on the quay for six sous as I was coming here," explained Pomm.

Françoise smiled. Pomm, who by this time had almost entirely filled up his flat with secondhand books, now took every opportunity of bringing her his latest bargains. Soon, if she did not take care, she foresaw that her own flat would be the prey of Pomm's hobby too. But she thanked her old friend, and presently Clémence came in to say that lunch was served.

Jacqueline flew to her to show her the boy-doll.

"He's a sailor-boy. He used to be one of the crew on Pomm's ship," she explained to the maid, who was hurrying her off to wash her hands before the meal. For the child had a wonderful imagination, and was always inventing romantic explanations of the most ordinary things.

Five minutes later she entered the dining-room where her mother and Pomm were already seated at the table, with hair fresh-brushed, and hands pink and damp from a recent vigorous ablution. Instead of taking her place quietly, she took a short run

and leapt into it like a boy, and her skirts, flying up round her, disclosed her bare legs and her rosy knees.

"Jacqueline!" said her mother in a tone of reproof, "where have you learnt such boyish manners?"

"I saw the little boy in the concierge's *loge* do that," said Jacqueline unabashed. "I can do it almost as well as he can now!"

Her mother was dumfounded, and found no immediate answer.

But this time Pomm intervened. He believed it to be his duty sometimes to collaborate with her mother in the undertaking of Jacqueline's education.

"If you jump about like that and show your legs, you'll never get a husband later on, Jacqueline! Men don't like tomboy girls who show their legs."

"I can't help that," said Jacqueline, philosophically. "The man who marries me must take me as I am, or he won't get me at all."

So saying, she picked up her spoon daintily, and began breaking the shell of a boiled egg.

And both Françoise and Pomm realized that in this particular argument Jacqueline had once more got the better of them.

Françoise Réville, after settling down in Paris with Jacqueline and Clémence, had very gradually but very apparently altered. The sudden revolution which had been brought about in her mental and spiritual self after the discovery of her husband's true character had affected her outwardly as well as

inwardly. Her face never regained the frank look of ingenuous belief which had been its chief characteristic, and which had proved to the outside world that she was genuinely delighted with it, and quite willing to take it at its own exaggerated valuation, as an excellent and most kindly thing. But what her expression had lost of innocent youth, it had gained in sweetness and depth. Though her eyes and mouth smiled less spontaneously, they had a deeper and softer serenity which was the result of her acquaintance with sorrow. And this lent a great charm to her face.

Paris, too, did for her what it does for most women, foreigners and provincials, who come to her in the full bloom of their womanhood. It gave her a subtle comprehension of her own femininity. It gave her even more. The life she led after she had definitely settled down in the capital was entirely different from the life she had led with Adrien at Rouen. There she had been the submissive, loving, tender wife, who allowed herself to be as wax in the hands of her husband. When he had married her, he had wished Françoise to give herself up entirely to the material comfort of his home and of himself. He had done as he had intended to do before his marriage—and had moulded his wife to his own ideas. With the restricting influences of her husband's narrow view, and of the equally limited ideals of provincial society, Françoise had allowed her brain to stagnate, just as it had stagnated in her early youth at the convent. The poor girl had indeed

begun to believe that all effort towards the acquiring of a clearer or more cultured mentality was absolutely wrong, and she had finally abandoned herself entirely and without resistance to Adrien's training.

But Paris had awakened her intellectually as well as morally—at least as far as she was capable. After she had first settled there, she had made several acquaintances by the help of a few friends of her husband's who had received him into their houses when he was a young man alone in the city. These acquaintances now came to her in sympathy and friendship, and this led to the making of others. By degrees she collected quite a pleasant circle around her. And with careful selection her chosen companions were those who were interesting in themselves—writers, painters, professors of both sexes, and a few political men and their wives. Françoise was fond of reading, and now she was free to read what she chose, being no longer in any leading-strings. With Pomm's help—who lent or bought her all the books she required—she rapidly became a well-read woman, deeply interested in all forms of thought and action of her time, and well versed in artistic, literary, and even political, matters. Jacqueline now did not take up all her time, although she was devoted to her and watched over her child most carefully. But she no longer tended her as she formerly had done. She taught her now to look after herself. She wished to develop in her at an early age, and concerning the most material and ordinary things, a spirit of self-dependence and of per-

sonal initiative. 'And though she still made all Jacqueline's clothes, when the child began to go to the Lycée, there were many more hours of freedom at Françoise's disposal.

It was about this time that she began to take more interest in herself, too, and in her own person. Her Parisian women friends initiating her into the mysteries of the toilet, she learned many small secrets which were helpful to her. She had been a simple, serious girl, strong and healthy and inclined to be fond of pretty clothes, but she had never been told that she was good-looking, and had never given her personal appearance much thought. Now, in contact with other women who were dainty *Parisiennes* with the subtle, acquired charm of their species, Françoise was urged to pay more attention to herself, and by degrees the quiet, reserved, and somewhat colourless young woman had blossomed out into a consciously charming creature. But, though Françoise took great pains to improve her personal appearance and had gained more skill in the choosing of her gowns, she took an interest in her physical self merely for the genuine pleasure of pleasing her friends. She had no thought of sex-conquest. All love-interest seemed for ever to have been crushed out of her. There was, as it were, a numbness in her brain concerning the opposite sex that was most strange.

This was not wholly the result of her conscious will, but largely of her primary education. Although she now rebelled mentally against the ethics of self-immolation which had been the basis of her upbringing, most of the early teachings she had received were

too deeply rooted to be eradicated even by the force of her will. She had assimilated a habit of supine resignation by internal as well as by external persuasion, and it had become so completely a part of her nature that she could no longer find in herself the moral strength by means of which she might have freed herself from its urgings. After her one great and supreme act of decision—born of a sudden sympathy and understanding for a woman whom she considered still more unfortunate than herself, which decision had resulted in her visit to Madame Ducastel—all energy for fresh and spontaneous actions—individually thought out—had left her and she had fallen back once more into her acquired passivity. Indeed, it had so entirely sapped her virile force that it had deprived her spirit of all self-reliance, of all belief in self. Self-abnegation once more now formed so intrinsic a part of herself that it debarred her from all hope of recreating her own personality. But her intuition, which had only been repressed and not entirely stamped out, was still sufficiently unimpaired to guide her consciously in the task of educating her daughter on a totally different system from that of her own education.

All capacity for love, passion, and devotion she now had left in her, was centred upon her child. It was more than mere motherly affection which she gave to Jacqueline. There was in her love for her daughter all the eager hope of the woman who has not lived her own life, and who, having been cheated out of her own legitimate share of happiness, wishes to get even with destiny in the person of her child. She was de-

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terminated that Jacqueline should be all that she herself could never be—indeed, could never have been. Françoise wished to help the development in her daughter of all the natural human hopes, desires, yearnings and urgings which had been so wilfully suppressed in herself—and which, unchecked, might have led her to wish to taste more deeply of the knowledge of life. And though she knew that this spirit, once developed in Jacqueline, might teach her child many keen sorrows from which her own forced repression had sheltered her, at least she was determined that Jacqueline should not suffer the unsatisfying, savourless sorrows of the women of a former generation, who were systematically trained to accept the false for the real, and denied their lawful inheritance of human joy. She had also fearlessly considered the possibility of Jacqueline's natural tenderness being restrained—perhaps even destroyed—by over development of her intellect and will. But she was prepared to accept even this contingency, rather than allow her child to become over sentimentalised as she herself had been.

Françoise was genuinely fond of her friends and liked to please them. But the only man she received in intimacy was Pomm, for his perfect devotion was above all suspicion. He was now an old man, though he was as nimble and as interested in his own life as ever. He had retired from the Navy almost directly after Aklrien's death and the second-hand bookstalls were still his greatest joy—his single passion. Indeed he had almost entirely filled the four

rooms of his flat full of his purchases. From floor to ceiling they rose in serried lines, not a space between, and not a single inch of wall visible. His bedroom and his dining-room were similarly decorated and even his desk was crowded up by two tall piles of books on either side of his writing-pad. The strange thing was that though he continued collecting rare old editions and of musty volumes on heterogeneous subjects for so many years, he never read the books he bought. He was so taken up with his long walks through the streets of Paris, looking into shop-windows, poring over the book-boxes of the Quays, and attending the lectures at the Sorbonne, or Collège de France or various private institutions of the same kind in which Paris abounds for the delight of the student—that he never found time even to look into the volumes which crowded up his home. Whenever Françoise asked him why he purchased so many books and never read them, he invariably made the same answer: "You see I shall find them very useful to look into, when I get old, and have to stay indoors on rainy days. . . ."

As Pomm was already over sixty-five, Françoise often wondered when it would be that he would consider it advisable to remain indoors on rainy days.

But if his devotion to the finding of frowsy old books was touching, his devotion to the widow and the daughter of his old friend was equally so. He was an excellent English scholar and long ago had undertaken the task of Jacqueline's instruction in English. His accent left much to be desired, but his

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real knowledge of the language might have put many a free-born British subject to shame. He taught Jacqueline the English of the Bible, of Shakespeare, and of Milton, but he was powerless to teach her modern slang, ignoring its very existence himself. He had met many Englishmen during his travels, but had never been in England and believed that the English of Steele and Addison was the language spoken in the streets of London to-day.

To Pomm alone was allowed the privilege of taking Françoise Réville to the theatre—a pastime in which he delighted as much as Françoise did herself. Just as formerly Pomm had arranged to meet Adrien somewhere in Paris and go with him to some first-night performance, so he now arranged with Françoise to fetch her at seven o'clock, taking her to a restaurant to dinner and then on to a play. For he was the only cavalier Françoise could allow herself to be seen constantly with in Paris—where women may be adored though not always respected and where a lady—still young in years—is for ever compromised if she is seen often in company of a man of her own age. Pomm's white hair and silver beard were proof against all evil tongues, as well as his well-known respectful affection for the widow of his best and indeed only friend. So that Françoise never hesitated to go everywhere with him.

Françoise rarely alluded to Adrien in her conversations with Pomm, who was still so faithful to his friend's memory though he blamed many of his actions. This unreasoning tenderness of the old man

for Adrien's name touched Françoise so greatly that she never strove to destroy it. Though she had explained to him that Adrien's insincere charm had been the cause of much pain to her she never told him of the discovery she had made after her husband's death nor of the change which that discovery had wrought in her own feelings.

Notwithstanding the distance that now separated her from the day when she had first learned that she had been betrayed, she herself had not altered her opinion of her dead husband. She could not bring herself to find any excuse for him. Her love had died in one moment, and she would never have allowed it to revive and urge her by specious promptings to find any excuse for him. He was inexcusable. His had been an inferior soul altogether and could not be judged from her present standpoint without complete condemnation. He had acted as the lowest of Don Juans. In her appreciation there was no difference between him and the most fallen, most depraved of men. He had professed to love two women simultaneously, so that he might reap material benefits from each. Such an action was indefensible, and therefore Françoise strove to forget that he had ever lived or had been anything to her.

She realized fully that had she herself been at the time of her marriage the creature that she now was and not the soul-stunted artificial production that her education had made of her, she never could have regarded him as worthy of her consideration at all. When her memory carried her back to other days,

she wondered how she could ever have accepted him as a leader, as a master. His commonplace ideas, his narrow judgment, his very limited intelligence—all these were clearly apparent to her now that she had cast off her own shackles and had allowed her intellect to expand and to reach its own heights. The few friends she now had around her were of so different an intellectual calibre that they had helped her not only to realize her own mental self by contact with them, but also to judge equably the vulgarity of mind of the commonplace *bourgeois* who had married her because of her own ignorance and innocence, in the hope that she would never be able to fathom his own shallowness.

The flat in which Françoise and Jacqueline lived was a small one on the second floor, in a short street near the Place Wagram. Behind the house was a large space of ground which had been cultivated for many years as a garden, and possessed some fine trees and some small pieces of lawn. The landlord of the house had divided this into four small, even-sized plots by means of green trelliswork partitions, and each plot of ground was allotted to corresponding flats in the house. The plot which belonged to the second floor was one of the sunniest, so that Françoise was able to let Jacqueline play there during the fine days of summer while she herself sat reading in a wicker chair near the child.

The flat was composed of four rooms and a kitchen. One was a very large and airy bedroom with a fine southern aspect over the garden, and this was the

room which Françoise occupied with her child. When she had arranged to make over the remainder of her lease to the newcomers at the *Perception* on leaving Rouen, Françoise had also decided to sell most of the larger pieces of furniture that adorned the house. But she had reserved all the furnishing of her bedroom and of the drawing-room, as well as part of her husband's study, for herself and intended bringing it to her new home. But, the day before she left, the new *Percepteur's* wife had suddenly made her an offer for the rest of the furniture too, and Françoise, only too eager at this juncture to separate herself from all past memories, had gladly let it go at a mere nominal sum. She sold it all—the wide, two-panelled *armoire-à-glace*, the dressing-table, the chairs, and the broad bed that matched the *armoire*, the heavy silken hangings that had adorned the bed, the doors and windows—which had been the pride and delight of her bridal days. And with them she had sold Adrien's writing-desk in which she had found the letters of Madame Ducastel. All had gone—and Françoise had wished at the time that all the memories they represented to her could have departed with them. . . .

Françoise's new room was furnished very simply and had draperies of white spotted muslin at the bed and the two windows. The two doors of the room—one of which had access to the small hall and the other which led to the *salon* beyond—were uncovered and painted a creamy white. Her small and narrow bed was merely a spring mattress supported by four short legs set on rollers. At the head and foot of this, two

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boards were nailed, forming a head and a foot rest. These boards were covered with flowery cretonne in a charming Louis XVI. design, and a covering of the same cretonne formed the bedspread. Over this improvised bed, a large brass ring was fixed to the ceiling, and through this the simple curtains of frilled muslin were drawn and fell across the top and bottom of the bed. Jacqueline's small white-painted cot which was set close to her mother's bed was entirely adorned with white, and had curtains of spotless muslin treated in the same way. The walls were papered with a very light blue paper striped with a slightly darker tone. All the furniture—*armoire*, dressing-table and chairs—was of plain white-painted wood, and there was a wide lounge chair of wicker-work made comfortable with many fancy cushions, where Françoise often sat and read at night while Jacqueline slept. For Françoise was essentially a French mother, even if she was determined to give a free and independent education to her daughter. She humoured and spoilt her child in many ways, and one of the ways of Jacqueline was that she insisted upon the presence of her mother when she went to sleep.

Many of Françoise's methods of education were still old-fashioned, though she strove by every means to be a modern educationist. Thus she always consulted the child before making any decision concerning her.

"Do you want to go out now, *chérie*?" "Do you want to eat?" "Do you want to sleep?" were questions she was for ever addressing to Jacqueline. She

believed that by thus educating her child to follow her own individual tastes, she was allowing her to develop rightly along her own lines. As the little girl was consulted in every way, by degrees it was Jacqueline, and Jacqueline alone, who ruled the household. Even old Clémence—who had been in Françoise's service before the child's birth, though she managed the material part of the household entirely and would hardly allow her mistress to give her an order—was the slave of Jacqueline. Like most French servants she always did what the child wished because, as she said: "The little one is only a *bébé*; she does not know any better. She must be humoured."

So between those two adoring women, Jacqueline was allowed to go to bed when she liked, to eat what she liked, and to do entirely as she liked in every way, with the result that, although she was a most intelligent and interesting child, strangers sometimes found her inclined to be trying.

Although Françoise had determined to allow her daughter the free development of all her natural tendencies, she did not at first realise that an education cannot be achieved without a deft mingling of repression, and that if the good qualities of a child must be allowed to develop, the bad ones must be sternly repressed. Like many parents, she thought that because Nature had made her a mother, Nature had also by that same virtue made her an educationist. . . . However, as Jacqueline's education proceeded, Françoise found that she had attempted a task which was

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far more difficult than she had at first supposed it to be. But if it be true, as some wise *savants* declare, that heredity is but an imitation by the child of the parents' idiosyncrasies, then perhaps she was well inspired in allowing Jacqueline the full development of all her more dominating personal instincts, since her own self-repression was the very quality she most wished to avoid imparting to her daughter. For Jacqueline was so much in her mother's society that she could not have failed to imitate her instinctive self-abnegation unconsciously, had not Françoise herself, by developing in her daughter habits of almost excessive self-assertion, thus given her the best safeguard against the annihilation of her personality.

After she had passed her fourteenth birthday, Jacqueline was for her age a much-developed individuality. She chose her own clothes, ordered her own meals, and even decided what her studies should be. Luckily for her, she was a comparatively reasonable creature, and in most things showed a well-balanced mind, which she had probably inherited from her mother's forebears. For although she was the living image of her father, she had so far shown but few of his characteristics. Of these her love of coquetry and her winning charm were the strongest.

CHAPTER V

ONE bright afternoon about two o'clock, while Jacqueline was at the Lycée, Françoise was alone in the *salon* of her flat, embroidering some strips of *batiste* that were destined to adorn a blouse for Jacqueline. Jacqueline herself could not embroider. She was of the generation that learns Latin and mathematics and disdains the art of the needle. But as she was a very fastidious young person and liked beautiful raiment, she was delighted that her mother could do fine stitching to trim her clothes while she herself attended lectures on Higher Education.

As Françoise was about to begin on a fifth strip of *batiste*, the front bell rang. Clémence, before opening the hall door, came hurriedly into the *salon*, tying on a white apron over her blue linen one. She was concocting some wonderful *entremets* to please Jacqueline at dinner time and hated being disturbed to answer bells when engaged upon so delicate a task. Almost angrily, though in a subdued whisper, she asked her mistress:

"*Madame regoit-elle?*"

"Certainly, Clémence."

And Clémence made for the hall door like a shot from a gun. She found a servant-girl neatly gowned in black with a letter to deliver to Madame Réville, marked "*Personnelle*" and "*Urgent*."

Françoise held the missive in her hand one moment.

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The handwriting, weak and straggling, reminded her of the fateful letter she had also received from Clémence's hand one evening long ago. She broke open the seal and read:

"MADAME,

"I have no claim to your pity, but I am dying and would much like to see you. I am almost your neighbour. Will you come to me? Do not refuse my request. It is perhaps the last I shall make on earth."

The letter was signed in bolder writing, as if the writer had made an effort to write her name quite clearly:

"CÉCILE DUCASTEL."

Françoise felt a pang at her heart. After all these years, what could Madame Ducastel have to say to her? She had learnt through Pomm—who himself had read the announcement in a paper—of the death of Monsieur Ducastel, which had taken place about five years before. He had left Cécile only a small portion of his wealth. She was his second wife, and he had four children by his first marriage who had inherited the greater part of his fortune. Madame Ducastel had left the sumptuous abode where Françoise had once visited her, and had taken a flat in a street not far from Madame Réville. She had furnished it well with some of the furniture of her former home.

Françoise and Madame Ducastel had never met

since the day of their first and only interview. But Françoise did not hesitate long now. She sat down to her writing-table and wrote a few lines to Madame Ducastel, telling her that she would be with her shortly, and sent the black-robed maid back with the note.

Then she went and dressed herself to go out.

After she had been kept waiting for several minutes in a small *salon* which showed traces of the lack of a mistress's superintendence and proved to Françoise that Madame Ducastel's illness must have lasted some time, she was shown into Cécile's bedroom.

At first Françoise did not even recognize the woman in the wide bed. When she had first seen her, Madame Ducastel in the full maturity of her years had been still a handsome and attractive woman. Though she was then past forty-five, she had evidently made a great resistance against the growing years, for her entire person, though no longer endowed with the freshness of youth, had been still extremely well-preserved. But now!

She lay back on her white pillows—whiter indeed than they. Her once golden hair, so well *ondulée* and carefully-dressed, was now greyish-white, and was pushed back from her forehead in long straight wisps without a care for appearances. One felt that she had already travelled far beyond the point where a woman, even though she may be old, may still wish to charm. The skin of her face, without powder or rouge, was ashen-grey, and the network of wrinkles around the tired blue eyes with their creased lids

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transformed the once triumphant beauty into an aged woman.

Her pallid lips moved tremulously as she saw Françoise's eyes, almost against her will, taking note of the ravages of time, thus betraying the fact that she was almost unrecognisable. She held out her slim, wasted hand.

"I am altered, am I not? Oh, it is not worth while denying it! I am past all vanity, all coquetry. I have no longer any strength—any desire to live. . . . But death is not only the lover of beauty and of youth."

And then as there was a pause, during which Françoise stroked the thin hand with tender reassuring touch, Cécile went on:

"Thank you so much for coming. How good you are! . . . I have often thought of you—often—and wondered . . . wondered . . ." She broke off, as if afraid of expressing her thoughts.

And Françoise herself was silent and waited, meanwhile insistently and gently caressing the fragile hand she still held.

"When a woman is dying, she sees all the things of life differently—from another plane, as it were, and in their true relation to one another. . . ." pursued Cécile in her weary voice. . . . "I want to confess to you—and to receive your pardon . . . if you can give it me. For I need it. I have not been a good woman, perhaps . . . but I have suffered—suffered—terribly . . . so terribly!" And the tired lids fell again, closing

the weary, sorrowful eyes, and the broken voice sank almost to a whisper.

"I know . . ." breathed Françoise softly, as she looked compassionately at the pale face on the pillows.

Cécile Ducastel opened her eyes once more and gazed at Françoise. There was neither human fear nor jealousy nor curiosity in the glance. It was the look of a woman already beyond earthly things. She understood what was in Françoise's mind.

"Oh! you know . . . then?" And then, after another pause—"I have often wondered whether you did."

"Yes"—softly—"Yes . . . I know all."

Silence fell again between them. The dying woman seemed exhausted, but she rallied her courage to ask the next question, as if it touched a still vital spot in her heart.

"When did you know?" Cécile spoke as if a sudden flame of life had re-arisen in her soul and had awakened her to memory of self and of her once great passion.

"I learned the whole story a month after his death when you sent that letter to the *Perception*. I read all your other letters afterwards—though he had written injunctions on them that they were to be burnt in the event of his death. I thought that I had the right to know all them."

Cécile made no sound for a few moments. Then the faint voice spoke again.

"I always wondered what had become of that last

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letter I wrote. I tried to trace through the post whether it had been delivered or not. . . . I never found out."

"It was marked *personnelle*, so the new *Percepteur* sent it on to our private address."

"So you read all the other letters?"

"Yes."

"I am glad——" and Cécile's sad voice seemed a little stronger now—"I am glad that you did, because you would understand better then . . ." And she added somewhat anxiously: "You did understand—didn't you?"

"Yes—I understood."

Cécile's chill fingers clung almost affectionately to those of Françoise. She closed her eyes again. And then suddenly a new thought thrust itself into her fading brain.

"When you came to see me in the Place Malesherbes . . . ten years ago . . . was it not? . . . did you know then?"

"Yes—I knew then."

"Yet you did not reproach me! . . . you said nothing!"

"What was there to say? I pitied you—you had loved him deeply—probably far more than I had . . . and you were so unhappy. What would have been the use of reproaches?"

"Ah, you understood. And to understand sorrow is to forgive . . . everything . . ."

Françoise made no reply. Cécile's eyelids fell again and Françoise, standing by the side of the bed hold-

ing her hand, looked upon the half-conscious woman with pitiful sweetness. Then slowly—very slowly—from beneath the closed lids two chill tears fell and coursed down the wrinkled cheeks . . . tears of the dying, arising from an almost frozen source.

Françoise remained silent still, but she lifted a small cambric handkerchief from the table near the bed, and then very gently and with infinite pity she wiped away the tears of the dying woman.

Cécile, opening her eyes wide once more, looked long and deeply at Françoise, and at last she saw with entire clearness the heart of the woman revealed.

"You are a great and noble woman, Françoise Réville—I wish I had known you more. . . . You have a rare and generous soul. Women like you make the world a better abiding-place . . ." And then, after a moment's pause, she added again—for it was evident that her thoughts reverted constantly to the memory of the man she had loved. . . . "Did you love him too?"

"Perhaps I did," replied Françoise hesitatingly. "Perhaps I did . . . but only with the unreasoning love of a very young girl. It could not have been a great love—since it died so easily. . . . For when I learnt what you had been to him—you, who had loved him knowing his baseness—his trivial, mean baseness—my love for him died immediately. It was so small a thing compared to yours! . . . I understood that!"

"Dear Adrien!" murmured the dying woman softly, "dear Adrien . . ." as if claiming indul-

gence for his faults even now. Then suddenly remembering Françoise's rights, she tried to explain to Adrien's widow the unlawful love she had felt for him.

"He was so young, so lonely, when I first knew him. . . . He had never known his mother—and his father had never been greatly attached to him. He had only his one friend—Pomm—in the world, and Pomm was so often far away. . . . He wanted a woman's loving care and tenderness. . . . I was so much older than he was. . . . I had never had a child, and I had never loved my husband, though I had tried to. Adrien seemed to me to be everything I had missed in life. . . . I wanted to make someone happy—to get away from myself and from my own misery. So I gave him my whole life—all my thoughts—my entire devotion. I helped him to make a success of his life—I wanted his happiness above all things, even at the expense of my own. I rejoiced in the thought that I was useful—even necessary—to him."

"Yet you knew his selfishness—his personal inferiority?"

"Yes, but I loved him maternally, perhaps even heroically. When a woman is no longer very young, what she loves in a man is her own dreams for his future, and above all his need of her. The more experienced women love like that. The very young do not. They expect more for themselves and are less generous. . . . Perhaps you have found that out since?"

"No, after Adrien's death I put all thoughts of love out of my life for ever."

"Then, my dear, you have never known life—for human love is human life."

"Perhaps not—but I have known maternal love—which is almost love Divine."

"Ah, yes!—you are right. . . . The love I had for Adrien was almost that."

"But, caring for him as you did . . . how could you advise him to marry me?" asked Françoise gently.

"Ah! my dear, I deluded myself with the hope, as do so many women who have sacrificed themselves as I did—that the nobler part of his love would always be mine."

"And I," said Françoise sadly, "I too thought that! Before I knew about you, I supposed that he had perhaps had other or lesser loves in his life before he had met me. But I believed that I—his wife—held the nobler part of his faith."

Over Cécile's wan face a sad smile flitted. It was the smile of the woman who had learnt to see where the shallows of life lie.

"Every woman who herself loves ideally thinks that she holds the nobler part of her lover's love. . . . We both thought the same of Adrien. Now we both know that there was no nobler spirit in him. . . ."

Françoise bent her head and made no reply. The sick woman's breath came more laboriously. Françoise hung wistfully over her, wishing that her last

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thoughts would not dwell on such sad reminiscences. But Cécile's spiritless voice rose once more in tones of exceeding pity.

"Poor Françoise!"

But Françoise's face glowed with an irradiating smile.

"No, I was not poor. . . . You see, I had the child. The child brought me comfort."

"Yes, but you were young . . . so young!" said Cécile with the insistence of a woman for whom love and passion have been the great things of life, and who values them above all other human joys. . . . "You might have sought and found love once more. I had already come to the end of my life as a woman who can charm and please when I lost my lover. . . . But you—you are so young!"

"When I discovered that Adrien had never cared for me then all idea of love for ever died in my heart. I gladly resigned myself to a loveless life—for I had Jacqueline, my daughter. . . . I willingly sacrificed all thoughts of passion and of marriage to her."

"Ah, yes! . . . That is true—you had the child. That was your comfort . . . I had nothing."

Again for many moments no word was spoken between the two women—the living and the dying—who had both loved the same man, and who now held one another's hands in true sympathy. The long shadows of the wintry afternoon were invading the room, chasing out the light of the sun and covering all things with its grey, misty shroud.

Then Cécile spoke again—more falteringly—for her strength was decreasing rapidly.

"I must tell you another reason why I sent for you to-day. . . . I have no children—no relations of my own, and I have quarrelled with Monsieur Ducastel's family. I am quite alone in the world. I want you to allow me to leave the little fortune I still possess to your daughter—to Adrien's daughter. . . . Don't speak yet——" as Françoise made an instinctive gesture of refusal. . . . "Don't say 'No' yet. . . . Understand this—you who understand all things of the human heart so well. To me it will seem some small reparation, and I shall die more easily. I think that I could be comparatively happy now, if I could believe that my small fortune could be of use to her . . . to his child. . . ."

"But, *madame*——"

"Please, dear, kind and generous woman—do not refuse my last request! Be charitable to the end. . . . Let her accept from me what may perhaps be her independence. . . . I know your own circumstances. Your dowry was a comparatively large one for the provinces, but I am sure that you have found it difficult to live comfortably and educate your daughter on your income. I know that Adrien left nothing. . . . Please let me do this. . . . Be as merciful as you have ever been. Grant me this last desire. Let me leave what I have to her. . . . In a few days—perhaps in a few hours—I shall be dead. . . . Do not refuse my last request!"

Françoise was battling against her tears, but she was vanquished. She answered gently:

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"I will not refuse. It shall be as you wish."

The dying woman pressed her hand and gave a small sigh of satisfaction. Then Françoise, drying her eyes and speaking in a tender voice, urged:

"Now you must rest. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Don't leave me," pleaded Cécile. . . .

"Don't leave me. Stay with me to the end. It's so terrible to die alone. . . . There is no one to come to me—no relation—no friend!"

"I will not leave you. I will stay with you, since you wish it. Is there anything you want?"

"Nothing now . . . only your forgiveness."

Françoise bent forward and kissed Cécile on the brow.

"Do not let us speak of forgiveness. . . . There can be no such word between us."

Cécile pressed Madame Réville's hand once more.

Françoise sent a note round to Clémence, telling her not to expect her home that evening and to take special care of Jacqueline, who had never slept a single night away from her mother since her babyhood.

The following day she returned home for a few hours to put some things together and to explain her absence to Jacqueline. During Françoise's absence from her bedside, Madame Ducastel was able to see her lawyer and give him her last instructions concerning the disposition of her property.

Jacqueline was both astonished and dismayed to hear that her mother was to leave her again, and as she was ignorant of Madame Ducastel's very exist-

ence, Françoise told her that she had suddenly been called to the deathbed of an old school friend from whom she had not heard for many years, and gave her no further explanation. Jacqueline then consented to remain alone with Clémence, and Françoise went back to tend her husband's mistress till the end.

A week later Cécile Ducastel died in Françoise's arms. Françoise and Jacqueline were the only mourners to follow her coffin to its last resting-place.

CHAPTER VI

By the time that Jacqueline was a tall girl, with half-long skirts and a blond pigtail doubled up twice and held with a wide velvet bow, Françoise had gathered around her a circle of charming and interesting acquaintances; and Jacqueline, who from the age of twelve had served tea on her mother's at-home days, had become inured to society and social conversation at an early age. She was a most precocious and intelligent girl, and as her studies at the Lycée progressed and she became possessed of more knowledge, it was quite natural that, brought up as she had been, she should have an exaggerated idea of her own importance. Françoise of course realized that this self-sufficiency was the weak point in the moral armour she had wished to give her child. But she condoned these faults in Jacqueline because of the opposite virtues they implied.

On a toujours les défauts de ses qualités. If Jacqueline was self-assertive, headstrong and wilful, she was frank, self-reliant and proud too. And as she was accustomed to lead at home, she became also accustomed to lead at the Lycée. Her young companions were all subservient to her. She appeared to them as an infallible oracle; they relied upon her judgment, and, admiring her greatly, always sought her advice. This adulation on all sides only served

to increase her opinion of her own value, and though she was never offensively conceited in manner, yet she was convinced that she was an exceptional girl. In a sense she judged rightly. She had far more social and moral experience, far more *savoir-faire*, than most maidens of her age. She had always been allowed so much liberty by her mother that she never could have supported the restrictions imposed upon her young comrades by their parents or guardians, neither could she have lent herself to the spirit of ruse which was taught them, and only too well assimilated. As she did not hesitate to declare her independent ideas, she was often an element of revolt among her schoolmates, and many parents warned their daughters to avoid her companionship.

But these things mattered little to Jacqueline. She had her own life, her own ambitions, and her own ideals, which were different from those of most girls of her age. Her companions in their own homes were mostly educated on the principles which had formed the minds and brains of their own mothers—women of the same generation as Madame Réville—although the system of actual learning was improved upon by the curriculum at the Lycée. Most mothers of Françoise's generation wished their daughters to acquire superior knowledge, yet they desired them to conform to that artificial ideal of maidenhood which preserves the girl in total ignorance of life until her marriage. With a broader, wider culture, that ideal was forcibly disappearing in reality; but *outwardly* their parents wished the girls to appear

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as ignorant and innocent as ever—for such was the kind of education that still pleased the marrying man.

A deeper knowledge being incompatible with so restricted an ideal, the presumed ignorance of the Lycée trained girls was but an artificial production, hypocritically achieved by the advice of wily mothers. The affected innocence was only assumed when in the presence of men, and all these feigned qualities were but as a mark easily thrown aside when the girls were in the company of other girls. Jacqueline, for all her impulsive outspokenness, her wilful personality, and even her self-conceit, was yet a far more healthy product than her companions, for at least she said what she thought and thought what she said. Indeed, the inevitable duplicity of her companions appalled her, and debarred her from any real friendship among her school companions. She was on terms of good comradeship with one and all, but on terms of intimacy with none. This was not the result of her mother's advice, but of an instinctive selection on the part of the child. And Françoise, realising what a broader education had done for her daughter on this behalf, rejoiced in the result attained.

Yet there were times when she fell a prey to doubt, and asked herself whether she had done right in allowing the headstrong girl the upperhand. These were the days when she was appalled at her daughter's irrepressible spirit of domination. In these moments of doubt she tried to remonstrate with Jacqueline. But Jacqueline was not only tenacious, but believed herself to be impeccable, like all young and inexperi-

enced creatures of her age—and was the more difficult to manage.

One day she silenced her mother for ever on this subject by remarking:

"*Maman chérie*, it is useless to oppose your superior experience to mine. . . . I am in reality nearly thirty years older than you, for all children of my generation are more experienced than their parents."

"How's that . . . ?" began Françoise.

But Jacqueline proceeded to explain her theories without leaving her mother time to finish her sentence.

"You see, *maman chérie*, that as I was born thirty years after you, I am in reality thirty years older than you. For I came into a world that had progressed thirty years since your own birth, and therefore had thirty years' more experience itself. To those more perfected years I have added my own twenty years of acquired knowledge and learning, such as was never given to you, and this has given me a system of opinions and an erudition which you can never acquire now. . . . Don't you see, *maman*, what I mean?"

But Françoise was neither appalled nor silenced.

"I understand what you mean to infer, my dear. But I also understand something which all your brain culture cannot teach you. And that is, alas! that now, nothing can modify your personality from *outside*. You will learn the only real lesson of life, my darling, from within your own heart—for it can only be

taught you by your individual suffering. I can neither guide you nor guard you now."

At the age of eighteen, Jacqueline was a tall, slim creature with a bright and healthy complexion, glossy hair, and a fine, lissom, pliable figure. And though she was far ahead of her companions in her reasonings and in her practical knowledge of life, her ignorance concerning the passions and the attractions of her sex was so far absolutely complete.

She had already obtained both her diplomas, brilliantly, the *Brevet Simple* and the *Brevet Supérieur*, and now the time had come for her to make a choice and specialize if she wished to compete for a degree at the Sorbonne.

She told her mother one day that she had decided to attend the Literature lectures at the University, and to prepare her *Licence ès lettres*, for she was particularly fond of the subject and her literary taste was already greatly formed.

"You see, *maman chérie*," she said, "I have no particular taste or gift for art of any kind, though I might perhaps by dint of hard work transform myself into a mediocre pianist, or a second-rate painter. But I prefer to aim at something I can do really well. As you have always wished me to obtain some diploma or degree which can enable me to follow some career later on, if necessary, and in case I do not marry, I think I could with some effort make a good professor of *Belles Lettres*. Or I might devote myself to writing some day. So I shall go in for that."

"Do as you like, of course, *ma chérie*."

"Don't I always?" said Jacqueline, laughing, as she rose and went off into her own bedroom to dress to go out. For the fourth room of the small flat had now been turned into a bedroom for Jacqueline. It had been repapered and painted and newly furnished for her, and old Clémence—though Françoise had found it useful to have her near at night-time during Jacqueline's early childhood—had now been relegated to her room in the servants' quarters on the sixth floor of the house.

Jacqueline soon emerged again with her hat and cloak, for she was leaving for the Lycée. This was her last term, and she did not wish to miss a single lesson. She was punctual, earnest and methodical in her work.

Her mother looked after her with some pride, but stifled a small sigh. As Jacqueline was about to leave the room, she noticed Françoise's wistful gaze, and came back towards her.

"What is the matter, *maman chérie*?"

"Nothing, dearest," said Françoise, turning away her head.

"*Si, si*—there is something, *maman*," insisted Jacqueline. "Don't think you can hide anything from me—your soul is as clear as crystal! Now then, dear, out with it!"

The tall, graceful girl had taken her mother by the shoulder, and was peering down into her face.

"What is it? Tell me!" she demanded peremptorily.

"Well," said Françoise, hesitating and somewhat

shame-facedly, "if you will have it, I was sighing, my dearest, because, in spite of your brilliancy and in spite of your cleverness and all your knowledge, I wish sometimes you were a little tenderer—a little gentler—towards me. . . . That's all, dear."

Jacqueline remained in contemplation of her mother for a few moments in silence. She noticed for the first time the pallor of her mother's gentle, saddened face, and the threads of silver in the still luxuriant hair. She saw the heavy tears in her mother's eyes, and Jacqueline's heart, which still slumbered but which nevertheless was capable of a keen awakening, went out to her. In sudden self-abasement she threw herself at Françoise's knees and folded her in her strong young arms.

"Poor little *maman chérie*! You see what has happened! You wanted a free, independent, clever daughter, and you've got her, haven't you? But one must sacrifice something to brilliancy, *Maman chérie*, as you must know! Perhaps, in evolving a brain, I've suppressed my heart and with it the tenderer emotions. And you, *maman chérie*, you who have trained me to be what I am, are my first victim! *Que veux-tu, maman?* . . . *C'est la loi de la nature!*" But Jacqueline kissed her mother with far more real tenderness than she had ever shown before.

Luckily for the peace of Françoise's spirit, the gentleness of her child's filial caresses belied the cynicism of her words and took away their sting.

And Jacqueline, bending over her mother once more folded her yet once again to her heart, kissing her

ferently—not with the *tendresse recueillie* of the woman who has suffered and become herself sweeter in the process, but with the still unthinking caress of the strong, vital creature whose soul sorrow has not yet been either impoverished or enriched.

CHAPTER VII

JACQUELINE had been attending the lectures at the Sorbonne for over a year now. She was very much interested in her work, and thoroughly appreciated the entire liberty her mother not only allowed, but encouraged, her to enjoy as a student in the quarter. As the girl had nearly reached her twentieth birthday, Françoise was very happy to let her go to and from the Sorbonne alone, without the hired attendant who, in default of a mother, usually accompanies unmarried French girls of Jacqueline's age, for she considered that the experience Jacqueline would thus gain of the manner in which defenceless women are treated when alone in the streets would be most beneficial to her.

As they still occupied their flat near the Place Wagram, Jacqueline had to take two omnibuses to get to the Rue des Ecoles. She was very fond of walking, and usually took an omnibus or a tramway as far as the Madeleine, and when the weather was fine proceeded on foot from the Madeleine to the Sorbonne, down the Rue Royale, across the Place de la Concorde, and along the Boulevard St. Germain as far as the Boulevard St. Michel. This was a long distance for a girl to walk alone in Paris, and though Jacqueline was stamped as a student at first sight because of the leather portfolio containing her books of notes and reference under her arm, her tall and

rather striking appearance always attracted attention, and often caused her some annoyance.

But long ago when she was quite a child her mother had taught her what attitude was necessary for a woman alone in the Paris streets. Because a young Frenchman has more admiration though less real respect for women than an Englishman of his age, and because as a rule young French girls of the upper middle classes do not walk out alone, the girl who, like Jacqueline, thus violates conventional social rules and goes out unattended, must resign herself to be subjected to all sorts of petty annoyances, whatever her own behaviour may be.

Nearly every day Jacqueline was followed by some enterprising young swain who tried in vain to make acquaintance with her, though after pursuing her down several streets he would find that she gave no response, and usually abandoned the game. Jacqueline, nevertheless, found it most irritating and she understood that the repeated advice of her mother to maintain a strict appearance of severity in the streets was not without foundation. This attitude of men towards her had a curious effect upon Jacqueline. It not only wearied and displeased her, but it inspired her with a profound disdain for the male sex altogether. She felt shocked and humiliated by these anonymous attentions, and though by degrees she became more or less accustomed to them she never became entirely inured.

One day she had been followed all along the Boulevard St. Germain and down the Boulevard St. Michel

by a young *rapin* who tried to get into conversation with her at various crossings where the traffic sometimes held them both up and he was afforded an opportunity of being quite close to his quarry. He was a pathetically ridiculous sight with his small, shrunken figure clad in clothes that appeared several sizes too large for him—wide, baggy trousers, and a coat with flowing tails. His hat was of the wide-brimmed, slouching kind, and his necktie was quite the most phenomenally large of its species, being tied in a bow of black *crêpe-de-chine* with long loops that stood out across his shoulders, so that he looked as if he were composed of merely a touzled head surmounted by a wide sombrero and supported by a large black bow.

His appearance was so truly absurd that Jacqueline had some difficulty in refraining from showing her amusement at the sight of him, and some irony mingled with the vexation she felt at being thus pursued. When she had nearly reached the Rue des Ecoles, another crossing brought her pursuer close to her elbow, and this time he made the most of his opportunity, and addressed her with a medley of most fulsome compliments.

His persistence in annoying Jacqueline had been noticed by a young English girl—a fellow-student of Jacqueline's at the Sorbonne and a pupil at the same *cours*—who had been walking behind for some time and had noticed Jacqueline on in front. She had never spoken to Mademoiselle Réville at the Sorbonne but had noticed her often among the other students.

When she saw the absurd *rapin* trying to speak to Jacqueline against her will, guessing what had happened, she stepped briskly up to her side and addressed her in a low tone.

"Is he annoying you?"

"Yes, horribly! I can't shake him off," replied Jacqueline, recognizing her would-be protector at a glance.

"*Le vilain petit crapaud!*" said the English girl. And then as the *rapin* sidled up towards the two girls: "I advise you to be off sharp, you ridiculous little monkey!" she said to the man in English, which of course he did not understand. But in answer he stood grinning at both the girls, who had some difficulty in refraining from laughter at the little creature's absurd presumption. But Jacqueline, truly most vexed, looked haughty and was pale with disgust, while her English companion was scarlet with rage at what she called the imp's impertinence.

"What makes me so particularly angry is that, socially, the kind of person who dares to follow one in the streets would have to walk up the back staircase and enter by the servants' entrance, if he ever had any reason to come to one's own house at all!" she exclaimed. And she stuck close to Jacqueline's side.

At this moment the English girl caught sight of a man seated at one of the tables in front of the Café Vachette, and she immediately called out to him in a shrill treble.

"Oh, Oliver! Do come here a moment!"

As the man rose immediately and came towards her, she explained to him.

"There's a beastly little whippersnapper, an insolent monkey who has been following this young lady for some time and annoying her with his persistent and most unwelcome attentions. She's a fellow-student of mine at the Sorbonne. Do come and shake him off."

And then, turning to Jacqueline: "This is my brother, *mademoiselle*. You may rely on him to defend you."

The young fellow addressed as Oliver put down a fifty-centime piece in the saucer of his *bock* and immediately left the café in company with the two girls.

"I'll come with you as far as the Sorbonne," he said and promptly went and stood on the other side of Jacqueline, who was still pale with annoyance and trembling in all her limbs. "Don't be afraid, *mademoiselle*; if that little cad dares to annoy you in my presence, I think he'll rue it!"

Jacqueline raised a glance of gratitude that met the straightforward blue eyes of the big, tall Englishman, and felt reassured at once. But beyond murmuring her thanks she said nothing, and in a few moments the trio arrived at the door of the University. Meanwhile the "ridiculous monkey" had prudently disappeared. For such is the courage of the street admirer.

But the incident led to a friendship between Jacqueline and the English girl, whose name was Nelly Brent. She was exactly the same age as Jacqueline,

and was spending three years in Paris with her aunt and brother, in order to acquire the French language. Oliver Brent, nearly eight years older than his sister, was a painter. He had lived in Paris for the last ten years and had studied at the various art schools of the *Quartier* and at the Beaux-Arts, and was now an exhibitor of more than great promise at the Salon des Artistes Français as well as at the Royal Academy in London. He had his studio in a small street near the Observatoire, but he lived *en famille* with his aunt and sister in their apartment on the Boulevard Raspail.

Oliver and Nelly Brent were orphans, and Nelly had lived with her aunt since her father's death when she was ten years old. Oliver, who was then eighteen, settled in Paris as an art student. Now that Nelly's education was drawing to a close, Mrs. John Brent, who was a widow in comfortable circumstances, had let her house in London furnished for three years, so as to be able to go and live in Paris with her niece during the time of her education abroad. When his aunt and sister settled in Paris, Oliver, who until then had lived with a French family, came to live at the flat in the Boulevard Raspail.

With that spontaneous hospitality that characterizes English people both at home and abroad, and always fills French people, when they meet it, with such great admiration, Nelly Brent, who had conceived a sudden but real affection for Jacqueline after the incident of the "ridiculous monkey," asked her to come to her house to have tea one Thursday afternoon. It was Mrs. Brent's at-home day, upon which

occasion the aunt and niece received their English and American friends of the *Quartier*. For the Brents belonged to that section of Anglo-American residents in the *Quartier* which forms a set entirely apart in Paris, ignoring Parisians and by Parisians ignored.

After Jacqueline had been two or three times to tea at the Brents' house, she was one evening invited by them to dinner, and as Françoise did not wish her daughter to be out late at night alone, she decided to fetch Jacqueline home herself, and so make the acquaintance of these new friends.

Mrs. Brent, a kind, motherly English matron of the sort who looks upon the children of a rising generation as if they were creatures of another world, and too far above her for her to attempt to understand—still less control—they, was delighted with Madame Réville, the only Frenchwoman whose acquaintance she had ever made. She had been persuaded until now—and a good many honest English wives and mothers safe at home in virtuous England still share her erroneous belief—that all Frenchwomen, like the heroines of most French novels, are unfaithful wives and bad, though indulgent, mothers. But Françoise's quiet, reserved charm and maternal devotion quite won good Mrs. Brent's affection, and as their acquaintance progressed helped to dispel this conviction.

Nelly Brent was a tall, lanky girl with pale, honey-coloured hair, light blue eyes, with fair lashes and eyebrows, large white prominent teeth and full red lips. She had the flat shapeless figure and long, flexible hands with knotted joints which certain fortune-

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tellers declare show a tendency towards the possession of a philosophical mind. In summertime she nearly always wore a brown straw mushroom-shaped hat with a flopping Liberty silk scarf tied around the crown, and a skirt and coat of Liberty green serge. In winter she was dressed in the same way, except that her straw hat was replaced by a felt one of the same colour. She was a good, kind, hoydenish girl with a certain amount of brain culture which she had not quite assimilated but had stored up in her mind as one stores useless furniture in a boxroom. She was troubled neither with nerves nor taste nor subtlety. But she was a staunch and true friend, and had a genuine liking for Jacqueline that rapidly grew into real friendship as the months went by.

Though Nelly was a thorough Brent, Oliver, her brother, was entirely different. It was astonishing that a man with such artistic tendencies, with such an enthusiastic love of beauty, should come from the Brent stock, for, admirable folk though they were, the Brents were yet *bourgeois* of the *bourgeois*, and had no conception of art in any form. Perhaps, however, one might have sought and found the explanation of Oliver's artistic tendencies in the fact that his father, Charles Brent, a City solicitor, had met, loved, wooed and married a French girl, the daughter of a painter of some talent whose acquaintance he had made when over in Paris on business. But after Suzanne Lefort had married Charles Brent, she did what so many French women of spirit do when they go to live in England: she became more *entichée* of

the manners and customs of English people than any British female born on English soil can ever be. She was continually comparing the virtues of the English with the weaknesses and faults of the French. She rarely made her comparisons with real discernment, for she was so grateful to Charles Brent for having married her without a *dot* that she was apt to be somewhat biassed in her judgments.

But all her adoration for her new *patrie* did not prevent the fact that her son Oliver was more like a French boy in his instinctive love of beauty and of form than an English lad; and when at an early age he developed a decided love and talent for drawing and painting, Suzanne was obliged to admit—much to her sorrow—that he had inherited the gifts of her own artistic family rather than the more stolid characteristics of the good Brents. Oliver was eight years old when Nelly was born, but the poor mother had little time to rejoice in the possession of a daughter whom she intended to bring up *à l'anglaise*, for her own short life had almost come to an end. Had the young French mother lived, she would have revelled in the fact that Nelly was as English a girl as could be desired. She was the image of her fair-haired, genial father, and had none of the dreaminess, none of the artistic imagination, of her brother. Unfortunately for both Nelly and Oliver, their father died ten years after the loss of his beloved French wife. Oliver, already destined for art, was sent to Paris to study, by an assembly of grave Brent uncles who represented the entire family council—for Su-

zanne had no near relations of her own—while Nelly was taken into the home of Mrs. John Brent, who had means and no children of her own. She had sent Nelly to a good high school, and when the girl was eighteen Mrs. Brent had decided that her niece's education should be finished in Paris, where Oliver still lived in the French family—distant connections of his own mother—of which he had been a member for the last eight years.

His dual education had made of Oliver Brent rather a complex individuality in spite of his uncompromisingly British appearance. Though he had the bright golden hair, the clear blue eyes, and fresh complexion of the true Brents, he had much in him of his French forebears too. But he was not entirely French. For he had received his earliest education in England, and there is nothing more uncomprisingly indelible than the strong moral training of the Anglo-Saxon. It imbued Oliver with a sound ethical judgment, and equipped him with an armour of invincible character that no demoralising external force, however insidious, could ever pierce through. But as it tended to develop neither his taste nor his intellect, it could neither influence nor aid the progress of his innate artistic yearnings.

From his babyhood his mother had spoken French to him, so that although he learned English from his father and from his nurses, he was quite familiar with French too.

When he went, at the age of eighteen, to live in France entirely, he was already prepared through

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his knowledge of the language, as well as by his own partially French nature, to assimilate what most appealed to him in French life. At the time when he met Madame Réville and her daughter, he had evolved a curiously dual personality. 'All that early education can achieve in the moulding of an individual, in the influencing of his morals and convictions, and in the fashioning of his reason, had brought out in Oliver his most British tendencies. But all the suggestions of his impulses and instincts as well as his artistic tastes were entirely French. Being an artist and living in Paris, the French element in him necessarily predominated until he was brought face to face with some moral dilemma—and then the whole force of his British convictions at once affirmed itself victorious in him. It was a strange mixture as of two individualities within one soul which gained him various and varied sympathies among many strongly conflicting individuals.

Oliver Brent was an artist to his finger tips. He was enthusiastically and passionately attached to his art. He had large ambitions and was determined to be one of the great painters of the day. That he would ultimately attain his end was almost certain, for he had already set his foot upon the road that leads to glory. He was a tall, strong fellow, not oppressively athletic, but lithe, supple, and nervous. His sister's noisy and somewhat overpowering vivacity often wearied him, but he was completely devoted to her nevertheless. He was reserved and proud, though not a bit of a *poseur*, and was thoroughly liked by all

his companions in the *Quartier*. But his temperament, compared with the exuberance of his sister, appeared somewhat cold and restrained. His enthusiasms were deep, lasting, and patient. He was an excellent and most reliable fellow, and was looked up to by his aunt with that rather plaintive and touching awe of some Englishwomen for all males of their families, whether fathers, husbands or sons.

Everything Oliver did or said was for her always right. His word was indeed her law, and if anyone could inspire the buoyant Nelly too with a subduing respect, it was her brother Oliver. They were great companions, and there was nothing that Oliver enjoyed more than to take Nelly out with him to the museums of Paris and endeavour to interest her in the pictures and sculptures he explained to her. Nelly, however, possessed no artistic tastes, and visits to the Louvre or the Luxembourg Gallery did not appeal to her very much. However, when her friend Jacqueline could be persuaded to join them, there was no happier trio of friends in Paris than Oliver, Nelly and Jacqueline.

Jacqueline was as analytical and as over-sexed as Nelly was the reverse. And yet the girls became devoted friends. As she had grown older, Jacqueline had somewhat frightened her mother by her excessive spirit of coquetry. It had developed almost unconsciously at first, but now it was one of her chief characteristics. In spite of her mental culture, her scientific knowledge and philosophical understanding, her innate femininity was stronger even than her will,

and Françoise was bound to admit herself unable to cope with it because of its instinctive force. As soon as she had become aware of this powerful element in her young daughter—which was a characteristic inherited from her father—Françoise had endeavoured to crush it out by repeated appeals to her reason and intelligence. But the training of her brain had only seemed to intensify it, and, being now consciously awakened, her coquetry became far more dangerous than if it had remained merely instinctive.

Françoise therefore hailed with joy Jacqueline's friendship with Nelly, whose blatant good spirits, boyish love of fun, and entire lack of sex-interest made her an excellent companion for Jacqueline. She restrained Jacqueline's temperament, without even being conscious of it herself. By her ridicule of them, she belittled sentimentality and charm and all those feminine artifices by means of which even very young girls seek to attract men, and her sound common-sense, as well as her healthy boyishness, had an excellently subduing effect upon her young French friend.

The rather proud beauty of Jacqueline, and the quiet reserve and gentleness of Françoise, in comparison with his sister's boisterousness and his aunt's naïve and voluble affection, appealed greatly to Oliver. As an artist, he could not but admire the beauty of Jacqueline. Her tall slimness, her golden hair, her dark eyes—so winning in their expression—her firm, decided lips, and her *vibrant* yet proud little nose, made so attractive an *ensemble* that Oliver, soon after his

family had made the acquaintance of Madame Réville and her daughter, began to realize that he had lost his heart to the fair young French girl.

For some months there was much pleasant intercourse between the two families. The well-meaning Mrs. Brent seemed as fond of Françoise as "Noll and Nell," as she quaintly called her nephew and niece, were of Jacqueline, and the comparisons they could establish between English and French family customs were always a great source of interest to both Mrs. Brent and Madame Réville. Mrs. Brent was agreeably astonished to see how Madame Réville had brought up her daughter. The good lady was for ever lamenting the destiny of the "poor young French girls," who are never allowed any individuality of their own. But, when compared to Nelly's, Jacqueline's independence was but a rudimentary thing even yet.

As the friendly relations of the Révilles and the Brents were beginning to ripen into real friendship, there were times when the pleasant harmony that existed between the two families was threatened with destruction by the attitude of Jacqueline towards Oliver. At times her "cursed femininity," as he called it, and her love of coquetry, would get the better of Jacqueline, who, to amuse herself, would treat Oliver abominably. She soon perceived the attraction she exercised over him, and it amused her to test the extent of her powers. Notwithstanding his partially French temperament and education, the honest matter-of-factness of his English training in his relations with women still survived. He never entirely

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assimilated during his residence in France the methods of light *galanterie* in which the young Frenchman excels. He therefore failed to understand the motives of such fine play as Jacqueline's subtle flirtation and was often at a loss to discover the meaning of her deceptive smiles. Yet there were times when he shrewdly distrusted her and began to understand faintly that the young lady was only amusing herself. He therefore assumed an attitude of courteous indifference, which, however, was not devoid of a certain susceptibility to her blandishments. This posture goaded Jacqueline to renewed attacks of her wiles, and when, having once more entrapped Oliver in her net, she again mocked and jeered, the young man lost his temper. Then there were fiery quarrels between them.

In these instances peace was often restored by the kind-hearted Nelly, who generally succeeded in being blamed by both of them, but who good-naturedly accepted all reproaches, provided she could get them both back into friendly relations once more.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE day Mrs. Brent came to call upon Françoise Réville. Jacqueline and Nelly being together at the Sorbonne, and therefore well out of the way, Mrs. Brent felt herself relieved from the strain which the cold, discerning eye of her up-to-date niece always put upon her. She thawed considerably, and in her confidences to Françoise when quite alone, she did not try to conceal her delight in her freedom from restraint. For Mrs. Brent was afraid equally of her Nell and her Noll, though she adored them both. She was really only her natural self when out of their presence. She was so convinced of their superiority of herself both in the knowledge that was gained in the world, and the knowledge contained in books, that she feared their fathoming scrutiny beyond all things.

She confided to Françoise as soon as she arrived in her dainty *salon* and was seated comfortably in an armchair of red leather close to a glowing fire of burning logs, that she had called to-day with the intention of making a suggestion.

"Wait until you are nicely settled first," said Françoise. "Untie your bonnet strings, take off your gloves, loosen your cloak at the throat, and then when you have drunk this cup of tea that I have ready for you, you can tell me your news."

Mrs. Brent did as she was told. She always did.

She allowed herself to subside into the wide chair and suffered Françoise to untie her veil, draw off her gloves, and settle her comfortably with hot tea and toasted *brioche*.

It was a fair April afternoon. The sun was shining with sufficient brightness to remind human beings that it would be capable of still more ardour when the completeness of the season should have come. Outside in Françoise's little garden over which the three windows of the *salon* enjoyed a glorious view, the leaves of the chestnut trees were bursting their varnished pods, showing a pretty display of tender vernal green.

"I think the fine weather will be with us soon, my dear," said good Mrs. John Brent to Françoise. "Summer time is coming. Nelly's *cours* at the Sorbonne—as she calls them: she forbids me to call the Sorbonne a school—though after all that's what it is, only the pupils are all grown-ups—will soon be at an end, and we shall have to be thinking about holidays."

"It's rather early yet to speak of holidays, is it not?" said Françoise.

"It's not *too* early to discuss *my* plan anyway," said Mrs. Brent. "In fact, it's just the right time to speak of it."

"Well," said Françoise, smiling, "I can see you are dying to tell me; so begin!"

"Well, now, tell me," began Mrs. Brent radiantly, "when the holidays *do* begin, how are you going to live without us? By *us* I mean myself and Nell and Noll."

"Well, I'm sure I do not know," said Françoise,

laughing. "I've never thought about it. Don't think me unkind, but I have never yet faced that terrible eventuality! But, of course, if the holidays do separate us, it will be a great loss to me and Jacqueline."

"I don't intend that the holidays *should* separate us then! What I propose is this. Instead of you and Jacqueline going to the seaside or to Switzerland or anywhere else, why should you not join us in taking a small furnished house for the season somewhere near Paris—St. Germain, or Versailles, or Vaucresson?"

Françoise was silent for a moment. Then, as the idea commended itself to her, she replied:

"Yes—if Jacqueline approves of the idea—I don't at all see why we should not put it into execution. Of course I should not be able to decide without her."

"Of course not, my dear—nor I without the approbation of Nell and Noll. Indeed, these modern children decide everything for us, don't they? When I was young, I did as my parents told me . . . Now it's just the reverse. I do what my niece and nephew tell me. But all the same, even they can't prevent me from having ideas of my own, and I think this is a good one."

"Yes," said Françoise, "I must admit that it appeals to me. I am happy to see the friendship between Jacqueline and Nelly progressing so steadily and surely." Mrs. Brent's smile of satisfaction was radiant. She was always happy to know that her Nelly was appreciated. "Your niece's example and influence are excellent for Jacqueline. Your Nelly restrains my

Jacqueline's superabundant femininity with her boisterous common-sense."

"And Jacqueline is a good companion, too, for Nelly. She can help her to be more womanly, more gentle, and more considerate."

"Oh!" laughed Françoise, "you must not expect the girls of our time to have consideration for anyone. They live and act to please themselves—not to please others! And I'm not sure that they are not right. We of our generation, at least in France, were brought up to be always dominated by the tastes, desires and wills of others. The consequence is that we are never really ourselves all our lives long. After I was no longer subservient to my husband, I became subservient to my daughter—as you are to both your niece and nephew. No, my dear, let us—the women of a past generation—recognise the truth and resign ourselves unconditionally to expecting but scant deference from those of the younger generation. We ourselves do not go the right way to enforce it."

"Perhaps not," acquiesced Mrs. Brent reluctantly. "But do think over my plan, I beg of you, and do your utmost to influence Jacqueline's determination nevertheless. It would be so charming to spend the summer together in some nice old house with a large garden in the country!"

"I agree with you, so far as my own tastes are concerned," replied Françoise. "But there is Jacqueline to be considered first of all—with me. I'll suggest it to her and let you know."

"I've heard of a charming spot near Louveciennes,"

pursued Mrs. Brent, still intent upon her idea. "It's within a fine walk of the old historic spot of Marly, with its beautiful old forest. How I should love to spend the summer there with you all! Oliver would have loads of sketching to do. And we two old fogies could rest under the trees in the garden all the afternoon when the young people were out together excursioning."

"It sounds delightful!" said Françoise, smiling with amusement at hearing herself described as an "old fogey. "But I'll let you know later what Jacqueline says."

The proposition made by Mrs. Brent met not only with general approbation but with enthusiasm from all concerned. Nelly and Oliver were both delighted at the thought of spending a holiday with Jacqueline, and Jacqueline herself was charmed with the idea. It was decided that on the Sunday after Easter, which fell in mid-April that year, the two "mothers," as the younger ones called them, should go on a voyage of exploration on the St. Lazare line to find the coveted summer residence.

It was found eventually at the lovely spot, midway between La-Celle-St.-Cloud and Louveciennes, of which Mrs. Brent had spoken. It was within half an hour's walk of the Marly forest, and close to a railway station. The house, which was formed of two old cottages knocked into one, was sufficiently spacious to accommodate them all comfortably, and yet had a spare room for any visitor they should choose to invite. The garden was a lovely wilderness of mossy

lawn, of old lime and poplar trees and thick straggling rose trees, many of which had remained so long untended that they had reverted to their former wild state and yielded deliciously fragrant and cuplike dog-roses, creamy-white and pink. At the end of the garden was a red brick tower, half covered with ivy, at the top of which was a room about four yards square, with a window in each wall, which could be arranged as a studio for Oliver.

When the young people went down to inspect the old house they declared themselves delighted with it. It was furnished simply, but quite charmingly, with old Norman and Breton benches and *armoires*, tables and chairs, and a few choice bits of old brass-work. The bedrooms were simple and gay with pitch-pine furniture and cretonne hangings. It was clean and dainty, if not luxurious. Already in early June, Mrs. Brent and Françoise had been able to run down several times to prepare the new abode, and by the middle of the month Mrs. Brent with Nelly and Oliver, and Françoise with Jacqueline and Clémence, were settled there.

And then a charming life began for all concerned. Oliver closed his Paris studio and brought down all his painting materials, and a large new canvas on which to paint Jacqueline's portrait—an undertaking which had been decided upon many months before. Jacqueline had provided herself with many new or favourite old books, while Nelly busied herself exclusively with the getting together of tennis racquets and balls, cricket and cricket implements, besides

hammock and deck chairs for lounging around in the garden.

The weather being very fine, life at *Les Peupliers* promised to be idyllic.

As soon as they were settled in the house, the young people began to arrange their own special and individual comforts. Oliver, taking up all his painting apparatus into the tower, fixed up his studio to his liking, and prepared himself for hard work every morning. The tower consisted of three small rooms one on the top of another, and a fine square terrace on the top of all, surrounded by a balustrade. From here a fine comprehensive view of the surrounding country could be obtained. To the left on the dim horizon one could see the straight line of the famous terrace of St. Germain, and beyond that a still fainter blue suggestion of yet more distant regions. On the right, rose wooded hills culminating in a beautiful sloping sward on which was set the *Château de Beauregard*—one of the finest country seats near Paris, which was originally built by Napoleon III. for his English favourite, Miss Howard, the mother of the Comte de Beauregard. Right in front of the tower terrace, on the wooded heights of La-Celle-St.-Cloud, rose another fine building, *La Chataigneraie*, the residence of Monsieur Blanc of Monte Carlo fame. And in the opposite direction behind the tower was yet another fine country dwelling known as the *Château du Camp*. Indeed, the delightful country abounded in famous *châteaux*, historical and modern, for the neighbourhood is one of the most picturesque near Paris. The former resi-

dence of La Dubarry was in a still almost perfect state of preservation at Louveciennes, and the castle of La-Celle-St.-Cloud, which had been inhabited by Madame de Pompadour, almost faced the tower on the western side.

Oliver was delighted with the idea of sketching fine views and landscapes as backgrounds for several portraits for which he had been commissioned. Nelly and Jacqueline were also charmed with the spot, Jacqueline because of its many historical souvenirs and beautiful walks, and Nelly because of the opportunities the garden afforded her for her favourite games. At the end of the first week and with the devoted help of a young gardener in the village she had turned the flat, green lawn into a very presentable tennis-ground. A croquet set was installed farther down near to the tower and between every couple of trees that grew near together, hammocks were slung ready for lazy occupants. When Nelly could not persuade Oliver or Jacqueline to join her in a game, she called in the *gamins* of the village and greatly to their delight initiated them into the mysteries of cricket and lawn-tennis.

But a new companion had now come into Nelly's life to gladden it still more, in the person of a young fox-terrier pup which had been presented to her one morning by her rustic admirer—the young gardener. Rip—an uneducated youngster who looked as if he were made of gutta-percha—so loose and flexible were all his limbs—was now a great feature in the life of *Les Peupliers*. He uprooted all the flowers which

Nelly planted with such diligent care in the garden in order to add to his vegetable diet and demolished all the boots and shoes of the community with indiscriminating impartiality. Above all he showed a decided predilection for the taste of Oliver's paint-brushes. But he was a great favourite with all the household in spite of his bad behaviour.

The days at *Les Peupliers* were thus arranged. Every morning each inhabitant of the Villa was free to do as he or she liked, and generally the early hours of the day were devoted to letter-writing, newspaper-reading, etc. Oliver remained shut up in his studio the whole of the morning. In the afternoon, after lunch, the three young people and Rip went for long walks in the environs, which they thoroughly explored in every direction, while the "mothers" rested in the garden in the comfortable deck chairs or hammocks, embroidering, or reading, or dozing. It was a thorough rest for all the inhabitants of the old house.

One day Oliver suggested to Jacqueline that the studio was quite ready for her, and it was decided between them that she should sit to him every morning from ten to twelve. Sometimes, though rarely, Nelly joined them in the studio, to read the paper aloud to them both, but more often they were left alone, and Oliver for hours together rejoiced in the exclusive possession of Jacqueline. He had decided to paint her full-size, standing against the bare white wall of the studio. He insisted that she should be dressed for her portrait as she was dressed every day

in the country, with a short pleated skirt of dark blue serge and a blouse of linen batiste with a turned-down collar and cuffs of simple embroidery. It was Jacqueline in her most modern incarnation and, as far as was possible, divested of all her femininity. Jacqueline had at first wished to be painted in a ball gown with a fan coquettishly unfurled and roses in her hair, in full attire for conquest. But Oliver, who knew how to show great determination in connection with all things pertaining to his art, insisted upon the particularly up-to-date modern character of his sitter, which he wished to interpret according to his own inspiration. And partly because the idea claimed her artistic taste, and partly also because it appealed to her "modernism," Jacqueline yielded to his persuasion.

She made a suggestive picture as she stood upright against the bare wall of the studio in her short simple gown, perfectly made and perfectly fitting, showing the slim lines of her very modern, energetic figure. The skirt was cut short a couple of inches from the ground, revealing a very feminine, though characteristic, foot and ankle, covered with black silk stockings, and neat, though serviceable, leather shoes. The regular pleats of her finely-tucked blouse were drawn down tightly into a broad band of tan leather, clasped at the waist with a golden buckle, defining the firm, yet delicate lines of her shoulders and bust and straight, supple back. The soft rolled-back collar and upturned cuffs revealed the perfect whiteness of her throat and wrists. At her neck the collar was tied with a soft bow of black *crêpe-de-chine*. Her hair

was dressed high in its shining curled coils, and her wide-brimmed Panama straw hat, trimmed with a scarf of white muslin, was held in her right hand. Her left hand rested on her hip in rather a boyish curve, her chin was lifted at an angle that suggested some impertinence, and there was an air of free defiance in her whole demeanour which Oliver had rendered admirably. Altogether, Jacqueline in her attitude on the canvas presented a very fair type of the independent young lady of her time.

"I shall call this picture 'The Portrait of a modern young French girl' when it is finished," said Oliver, smiling, once during the long solemn hours of a sitting.

Jacqueline smiled too, but made no response. She left the pose and came towards the painter, looking at her own portrait from behind his shoulder.

"Yes, it might be called that," she acquiesced, but made no further remark.

She was thinking to herself how interesting it was to see one's self through the eyes of another. That the presentment of herself, seen through Oliver's eyes, should be this self-reliant, wilful creature in such evident rebellion against all authority and all conventional ideas, amused her greatly. And, by means of his presentment of her character, Jacqueline was able to see more clearly into Oliver's own personality. Hitherto she had believed that he perceived only the feminine side of herself, since she had wilfully revealed only that side to him. That he should have discovered another self in her beyond that more evident and aggres-

sive self, and have represented, not only her better self, but also her more intellectual and thoughtful character, pleased and surprised her. The fact that he should have been capable of looking deeper beyond her more playful and coquettish femininity did not touch her heart, but appealed greatly to her brain, and although she made no remark, and indeed expressed no admiration of the work, she respected Oliver's instinct, and from that hour began to judge him in a new light.

During these long *séances*, while Oliver worked and Jacqueline sat motionless, much of the man's character was unconsciously revealed to Jacqueline, and each further revelation came as a pleasant surprise. Hitherto she had regarded him as merely a rather sympathetic young man, with whom she could flirt and amuse herself. So far Jacqueline had been inclined to treat all men as mere *passetemps*. "Give me women for true friendship and men for diverting episodes" she had said once to Nelly, who did not re-echo her thoughts, being far too masculine herself and finding that the attentions of young men were superfluous and most unnecessarily futile. . . . In order to paint her better self, Jacqueline knew that Oliver had been forced to seek deep down in herself for its expression, and as she had only just begun to realize herself, she became still more conscious of herself by the help of Oliver's picture. Consequently her approval of his insight strengthened her regard for his opinions, and if she was not yet subservient to them, at least they claimed her respect.

One day during the sitting they launched into a conversation upon the history of Art, and Jacqueline—always inclined to believe herself a little superior to everyone else because she had learned many things which few people learn—was astonished to find Oliver not only responsive to her ideas but still fuller of knowledge and personal opinions upon the subject than herself. Again she was as delighted as she was astonished, and when the conversation had drifted into other channels, she found that her mind even against her will was reverting once more to certain new presentations of thought which Oliver's conversation had suggested to her. She began now to discern Oliver's true personality which he had hitherto concealed beneath his extreme reserve of manner. Thus there grew up between Jacqueline and Oliver a new and more intellectual friendship that was based entirely upon their common mental interests. When Oliver began to talk of Art, then Jacqueline, for all her culture, was obliged to take up the attitude of pupil, for it was very evident in these discussions that Oliver was not only a clever and original-minded man, but also an artist of individual views as well as great talent, with an assured future before him.

"How is it, Jacqueline," asked Oliver one morning as they were together in the studio and had been discussing many things pertaining to life as well as to Art, "that you manage your mother so completely? She is a bright and clever woman herself, and yet she seems to have no will but yours."

"It is simply because of the stupid, stultifying edu-

cation she received in her own youth. . . . You see, she was trained to obey—to obey only—and never to take any personal initiative in anything, even in opinions. My father, to whom, Clémence has often told me she was devoted, directed all her actions, even her very thoughts, until his death released her from his dominion. Afterwards, when I was a baby and she was alone with me, momentarily she raised her courage by the mere force of circumstances, and took things in hand herself. But only for a time, until I cultivated a will of my own. Since then she has always let me lead. She not only did this systematically, wishing to give me an education that should be diametrically opposed to her own and so develop my own personal initiative, but also because she had no real will in her to oppose to mine. And ever since I have taken the lead, she has followed.”

“Do you remember your father, Jacqueline?”

“Very little. I was only four years old when he died. But, strange to say, I can never get my mother to speak to me about him. Notwithstanding her gentleness and my repeated insistence, she refuses all allusion to him—indeed, she seems numbed whenever I question her about him. So I’ve given it up. Some day she will perhaps tell me something. But even I cannot drive her to it. Her force of inertia on that particular subject is absolute.”

“There is perhaps some sadness connected with your father’s memory which she does not wish to reveal to you. It would be more merciful perhaps not to insist,” suggested Oliver.

"Yes, I have often thought that," replied Jacqueline in a dreamy tone.

"You do right, Jacqueline, to leave the subject alone, if it is painful to her. Don't you think so?"

"*Pauvre petite maman!*" murmured Jacqueline. And Oliver saw in her for one rapid instant a deeper tenderness than he had ever thought Jacqueline could feel.

A few minutes later Nelly came up the small winding staircase that led to the top of the tower. She appeared as a herald announcing the arrival of the "two mothers," who had been bidden by Oliver to view the picture for the first time. There had already been about twenty sittings since the picture had been begun, and it was now nearing completion. From the first it had been understood between Oliver and Jacqueline that the "mothers" should neither of them be allowed to see the picture before it was considerably advanced. "You know the saying—Children and fools should never be allowed to see half-finished work," Jacqueline had said sententiously to her mother when Françoise had begged to be allowed to see the first sketch which Oliver made in charcoal on the immaculate canvas. "I don't mean by that to suggest that you are either a child or a fool, *maman chérie*—I would never be so impertinent. But what I do mean is that one requires an artistic training that you have never had to realize what a picture may promise to the initiated, during its early stages. So you shall not be allowed to see it until it is nearly done."

Though Françoise protested, Jacqueline was obdurate, and declared she would not sit at all if the picture was to be seen by anyone. Oliver upheld her in this, and insisted that she was right, for he wished to compose his own work without any outside influence or suggestions. Thus had he painted Jacqueline as the "modern maiden of France" entirely from his own inspiration and exactly as he had conceived his idea of her, in practical every-day dress without finery or "prettiness," yet with all the character of feminine decision, self-reliance and self-confidence which the contemplation of Jacqueline suggested to him. But he put into the picture something more besides—which the girl herself had not yet perceived—because she was not yet prepared to perceive it.

When Françoise arrived in the studio, followed up the winding stairs by Mrs. Brent, she sank down upon the small green divan which stretched along the southern wall with a feeling of keen curiosity. For a long time she gazed at the picture without speaking a word. Quite ten minutes elapsed before she opened her lips.

"So that is how you see my daughter!" she said slowly, turning to Oliver, "and that is she—as she will appear to the world at large." For a few moments Françoise stood silent again. "Yes. I am satisfied. You have shown her just as I wanted her to be. A proud, self-reliant female creature, with all the real feminine qualities existent in her but still veiled or hidden by her rather boyish exterior. The

practical, simple dress—comfortable rather than elegant—the energetic, capable-looking hands, the defiant set of the head and shoulders—yes . . .” As she spoke she gazed upon the picture with a tender expression. “Yes, but it is still my baby Jacqueline’s face though, with its soft brown eyes, now so conscious of the value of her own self, with the sweet baby mouth—now so firm and set with human conscious will—with the fair baby curls that used to be so rebellious, now conquered into order and made submissive to hairpins and combs. . . . And yet! beneath that outward presentment of modern conscious womanhood, the soul of my baby Jacqueline still lives!”

Françoise had tears in her eyes as she spoke. She drew Jacqueline near to her. But Jacqueline, with false shame and fearing the mockery of Nelly who ridiculed all sentiment, did not dare show any of the sudden new tenderness towards her mother which her recent conversation with Oliver had evoked.

She eluded her mother’s caress.

“But, *maman chérie*, I am what I am! I am myself. I am entirely modern! You wished me to be so—you wished me to rise in revolt at all coercion; you wished me to have a mind and a will of my own. You did not intend that I should build up my soul upon the basis of meek humility. You wished the spirit of the conqueror, not of the conquered to inspire me! Am I not the complete achievement of the education you have given me?”

“Yes, Jacqueline, you are the living epitome of

my own revolt and, in looking upon your picture now, I see before me the result of my own work." There was a slight pause and Françoise, her gaze still fixed upon the picture, as if she were apostrophising it, continued: "Above all, I wanted you otherwise than I am. That is why I made your upbringing the very antithesis of my own. I am not yet sure whether your independence will make your happiness. But I sincerely hope that it will. I wanted to make you capable of defending yourself and your own rights. I wished you to develop your own individuality. I trained you not to be a victim of others. And if, in gaining self-reliance and self-development, you have won neither patience, nor tenderness, nor resignation—I alone am the one to blame—if blame there be—and not you, my darling, not you!"

Jacqueline was silent, but she looked at Françoise in astonishment. She had never believed her mother to be anything of a psychologist, and such words as these, coming from Françoise were a revelation to her daughter.

Mrs. Brent and Oliver and Nelly looked upon this unusual scene and listened to this strange outburst of Françoise in silence, Oliver alone understanding what it signified.

"But I am not only the product of your training, mother. I am also the result of the teachings of my own times. No one can avoid being touched by the spirit of one's own generation. The women of to-day wish to live their own lives, to seek out and find their own happiness for themselves. They are not

content to accept the destiny that others have ordained for them, as did the women of your day."

"You are right, Jacqueline. We were taught a resignation which you do not know."

"Nor wish to know, mother—since it would diminish our own individuality. But we have developed a sense of personal responsibility which you never dreamt of."

Françoise smiled—the deep, sad smile of the woman who has learnt life—not in books, but from cruel experience.

"There is one thing you miss so far, you modern girls, my Jacqueline, and that is the true knowledge which is acquired by testing life. That, alas! is only gained by experience! You will all of you, alas! yet have to bow your heads in sorrow before you will have quite understood the lesson that only life itself can teach. . . . You will find, as you grow older, that you will not always be able to subject circumstances to your own individual will."

"I shall always do what I *will*, mother. The strong coerce circumstances. Only the weak are crushed by them."

"Not always, Jacqueline—not always. You think that now because you are very young and untried. You will not always do what you will, but what you can. Believe me, dearest. I am older than you. I possess knowledge which no books and no teacher can ever impart to you—only life itself."

"It is by continually opposing them with their superior experience that so many mothers destroy all

spirit of initiative in their children's minds—and so paralyse all their efforts towards individual action," replied Jacqueline mercilessly. "I have noticed that so often among the mothers of my schoolmates at the Lycée."

"At least you cannot reproach me for having acted so, Jacqueline?"

"Oh, no, *maman chérie!* At least not entirely!"

Françoise smiled again, but her eyes never left the picture as she spoke. Again she appeared to address herself rather to the epitomized Jacqueline which Oliver's brush had painted than to the living Jacqueline at her side.

"You will see, Jacqueline, you will see later on for yourself, and then you will admit that personal proof and test are alone of real value in solving the larger problems of life. . . . God knows that I do not desire sorrow for you. But when it comes to you, alas! my dear, for you will not escape it—we none of us do!—then you will understand what I mean when I tell you now that it is invaluable."

"Well!" broke in Nelly here with some petulance, "when you have done talking, you two, and furnishing divers comparisons between the old education and the new, perhaps Madame Réville will deign to tell Oliver what she thinks of his work!"

"Oliver knows what I think. Haven't I been telling him all this time?" said Françoise, looking up and meeting Oliver's blue eyes. "Oliver knows my opinion quite well. Don't you, Oliver?"

"Yes, *madame*, I understand all your criticisms—

and they are a delight to me. Thank you," he replied gravely, as his eyes rested a moment on hers. "Come, let us all go in to *déjeuner*." And he set aside his brushes and palette and rose to leave the studio.

"But *I've* not said *my* say yet," broke in Mrs. Brent in an aggrieved tone.

"No, poor dear aunt," said Oliver, patting the lady on her broad back. "No, poor aunt, that's true. Well, well, say it now!"

"Well," said Mrs. Brent, rising from the divan where she had fallen panting after the walk up the steep stairs, "well, I like the picture very much indeed, and the way you have painted the embroidery at the wrists is quite wonderful. The hat is most lifelike too!"

Oliver laughed outright, and Jacqueline and Nelly joined in the laugh unrestrainedly.

"Dear aunt," said Oliver, patting her affectionately on the back again, "you are the best and kindest of all critics. You say the very nicest things, and you at least do not worry yourself with moot questions of education or character, or anything else. You are quite right, dear auntie. The hat is lifelike, and now"—tucking his arm in his aunt's and pushing her gently forward, "go down all of you to lunch. I heard Clémence crying out that sacred sentence—'*Le déjeuner est servi*'—long ago."

Then the two girls and Mrs. Brent began descending the twisted stairs once more, though Oliver remained behind to put away his things, while Fran-

coise lingered a moment longer in front of Jacqueline's picture.

When they were alone together and Françoise had remained some time before the canvas in silent contemplation, she turned to Oliver.

"My dear boy," she said, "I am deeply touched—more indeed than I can tell you. You have presented to us more than the outward epitome of Jacqueline's mind and character. For, not only have you shown me here the girl who is the result of my training, but . . ." and Françoise looked again at the face of the picture and heaved a sigh.

Oliver came up towards her, and affectionately, reverently, laid his hand on her arm and then forced her to look up and meet his glance.

"But—what?"

"Ah, you know well what I mean, Oliver, dear boy! Before the others, before Jacqueline herself I did not wish to say all that your portrait of my child suggested to me . . ."

"Say what you think now nevertheless, dear madame," Oliver pleaded encouragingly.

"You have done more than shown her personality and her character. You have put into her glance what is not yet there," said Françoise. "Though there is all her evasive, whimsical femininity on her smiling lips and in her palpitating nostrils, there is more than that. Into her eyes you have put the truer, deeper soul of her womanhood. . . . Alas! will it ever come to her?"

Oliver was silent a moment as Françoise and he stood together side by side before the picture.

"It may come to her," said Oliver at last, speaking very slowly with emphasis and as if weighing his words. "It *may* come to her . . . I hope it will. But, as you suggested just now, like the necessary knowledge and understanding of life, it can only be wrung out of human tears. . . . I am afraid you have made her too happy. You have kept all knowledge of sorrow and of pain from her. You have cultivated her mind alone—perhaps even at the expense of her heart. . . . Who can say whether you have been right? The future itself alone will decide that. . . . The truth is, she is not awake yet, and in my picture I have shown her as she will be when she is awake. Don't you see, dear Madame Réville?"

Françoise's eyes were filled with tears.

"Yes, dear Oliver, I see that you understand her—even as I do."

"That," said Oliver, gently and gravely, "that is because I love her too."

Françoise made no answer, but dried her tears. Then she put her hand on Oliver's shoulder and together they turned and went down the winding stairs to join the others.

CHAPTER IX

THAT same afternoon Oliver proposed that they should go for a picnic in the forest of Marly.

At first the "mothers" demurred.

"It would be so difficult to arrange," said Françoise.

"And it would be such a lot of trouble," quoth Mrs. Brent.

"And you'll all get rheumatism after sitting down on the damp grass—and I should have to nurse you!" wailed Clémence, who was present. The truth was that the lazy old woman did not like the trouble of packing the picnic basket.

"Oh, nothing of the kind!" cried Jacqueline, while Nelly dismissed Clémence's objections with a shrug of her shoulders.

Of course the young people won the day.

"Instead of having tea at five o'clock and a regular meat meal at eight, we'll combine the two," said Jacqueline.

"Then we'd better take my tea-basket and call it a high tea," proposed Nelly.

So Jacqueline and Nelly, with the grumbling help of Clémence, filled the wickerwork receptacle with a luxurious and plentiful meal of cold roast beef, ham, hard-boiled eggs, fruit and cheese, and an excellent salad which they packed ready-dressed into a deep

stone pot. They filled a similar jar with a *compôte* of raspberries and currants, and filled the milk bottle, the sugar-box, and the tea-box. Then they declared themselves ready to confront the wildest pangs of hunger.

"We can get some water to make the tea from the first keeper at the Grille Royale," said Oliver.

"Or from the spring in the park, which will be better still," put in Jacqueline, drawing on her gloves.

At last all was ready, and the younger people of the community and Rip in attendance left "*Les Peupliers*" at five o'clock with the basket. It was arranged that Oliver should carry it while the girls took charge of the rugs.

It was a gloriously beautiful afternoon as they passed along the *Route du Camp* which skirts the green glades of the *Bois Brulé*. The hawthorn hedges edging the road on one side were mingled with odorous honeysuckle now in full bloom, and the wild rose bushes ran in intricate confusion along the outskirts of the wood on the other side.

They tarried awhile in the golden cornfield that separates the Versailles from the Louveciennes road, for Oliver to rest, and soon they found themselves at the Grille Royale of the park of Marly. Here, alas! they perceived the first dilapidations of this formerly magnificent domain that had once held the fairest jewel among the Eighteenth Century castles of France. Built together with the castle itself in 1676, the Grille Royale, surmounted by vases sculptured by Jouvenet, had been furnished with magnificent iron gates, the

design of which was as delicate as lacework. But the aperture of the Grille itself had been narrowed and the gates replaced by common wooden doors. Luckily, some compassionate hand had planted a climbing rose-tree over the dilapidated stonework of the portals, and this somewhat hid the ravages wrought by the eager, ruthless hands of man and of time.

Rarely in history has there been so sad a destiny as that of the Château of Marly, for of all its beauty, luxury and art, nothing now remains but a few lichen-covered stones. The wide, semi-circular space beyond the entrance that was once a noble *Cour d'Honneur* was now transformed into a prosperous farmyard wherein ducks and geese strutted about in proud possession of the lawns that royal feet once had trod. At the left side of the gate, between two fine old trees, a swing had been put up for the farmer's children, who were now enjoying themselves swinging high to and fro on the very spot where the *Garde d'Honneur* had once presented arms to the royal *cortège* of "*le Roi Soleil*."

It is evident that the infuriated populace of the Revolution, must have taken a savage joy in not only destroying but in actually defacing both the architectural and artistic treasures of the royal domain, for even the broken remains of gateways, terraces, and fountains have been wilfully crushed and ground into humility to the earth. It is pitiful to contemplate the ruins and utter desolation of what was once so fair, so brilliant a spot. But Nature her-

self, less cruel than Humanity, has shown here some tender pity. For over the ruined remains of the fine porches or gateways of proud pilasters and lofty terraces which are still to be found in almost every spot of the royal grounds, she has mercifully thrown her fairylike mantle of leaf and flower and fern and grass, thus covering the shame of man's ruthless handiwork.

From the Grille Royale our group of young people, well content with themselves though awed into silence by the splendid sadness of the ruined beauty around them, followed the wide, stone-flagged road that led to the remains of the old castle walls, between the crumbling skeletons of once proud and high terraces, now clothed with flowering brambles and wild clematis.

Soon they arrived on the site of the castle, which formerly stood a fine mass forty-two metres square on the spot through which the road now passes. The bare of its wide walls is still distinguishable, forming a ridge about a foot high that rises from the thick soft grass. Jacqueline, who was walking on a little in front of her friends—suddenly recognizing the spot—she had been reading the history of Marly quite recently—begged that the famous site should be chosen for the spreading of their picnic meal.

The view was so beautiful from where they stood and the day so peaceful and bright that Jacqueline, physically tired and full of memories of the historical spot upon which their feet were now set, let Nelly busy herself with the tea-basket and sank down upon

the broad ridge of the crumbling walls. She could not refrain from allowing her thoughts to wander back to olden times, imagining to herself what this particular spot had been like when the three successive and brilliant courts and three consecutive Kings of France had lived here in splendour. She saw pass before her in imagination along the grassy sward that now covered the wide lofty terraces whose fine proportions were still undisguised, the graceful forms of the dainty Madame de Pompadour, the frivolous Madame du Barry, the practical-minded Madame de Maintenon, who from this spot had superintended the building of her famous aristocratic college for Women at St. Cyr close by. She evoked, too, the image of that most ill-fated of all the Marly beauties—Queen Marie Antoinette—who last of all had gazed through the high windows of the great *Salon d'Honneur*, decorated with the finest paintings and sculptures of the time—and had watched the sun go down in the sky in the blue distances of St. Germain beyond, that lay stretched out in the valley of the Seine before the castle, as she herself—Jacqueline Réville—was now doing.

Jacqueline, still as if in a dream, lived for a few minutes back in the past. In imagination she peopled the fine avenue around with dainty court ladies attended by their be-jewelled and be-laced cavaliers, walking beneath the deep shadows of the leafage. It was hard to believe that once in the wide empty grass-covered spaces that now flank the ruins of the castle rose on both sides six pavilions—twelve in all—which

were devoted to the use of the courtiers and attendants of the King, and were as richly adorned as the castle itself.

"O, Jacqueline, do leave off your dreaming and come and help us with the tea!" cried Nelly's petulant voice at last breaking ruthlessly in upon Jacqueline's reverie, and Jacqueline, reluctantly allowing her dream of splendour to fade away, turned her attention to the tea-basket at her feet, from which cups, forks, spoons and plates had been extracted without order and placed along the crumbling stonework of the old walls.

Then they spread out the feast on a table-cloth which had been folded over the top of the basket just beneath the lid, and, using the low ruined walls as temporary shelves for their pots and dishes, set to making the tea on the spirit lamp set on the spot that had once been the threshold of the *grand salon d'honneur*. For the "mothers" now hove in sight. They were carefully descending the steep stone-flagged slope that led from the Grille Royale—Mrs. Brent walking with mincing, careful steps, and Françoise with her light and graceful tread.

When the "mothers" were at last installed on the low walls with rugs doubled beneath them as cushions, the young folk stretched themselves around them on the grass, and the merry meal began. The table-cloth was held down with four stones taken from the crumbling ruins, and in the centre Nelly, who was determined to decorate the meal as befitted the occasion, had stuck a bunch of bramble and bluebells into one of the water bottles and placed it in the centre of the

cloth. Jacqueline and Oliver seated at the corner furthest removed from the wall, could not refrain from gazing with delight upon the fair view before them. From time to time they paused in their meal to contemplate some passing train rushing like an animated black snake across the lace-like iron railway bridge that spanned the distant valley, a puff of blue smoke seemingly issuing forth from its head. Right in front of them and immediately at their feet, stretched the hollow plain which once had been the famous artificial lake and where now amid its numerous grass-covered depressions where formerly bright fountains and minor ponds had shone in the bright sunlight a single tiny pool of still blue water alone remained as a witness to the once magnificent aquatic display that had made the grounds of Marly so famous. Now alas! on its edges were two village women washing their family linen while around them grazing peacefully in the early evening's light were a few horses and donkeys.

But Jacqueline and Oliver had been forced to relinquish their day-dreaming contemplation of the suggestive scene before them, by Nelly's reiteration.

"You might at least communicate some of your knowledge of this place to us benighted and ignorant folk," she said as she waved a great slice of bread and jam that she had been munching with her dessert, in the direction of the grassy hollows beyond.

"Certainly," said Jacqueline. "I am quite willing to tell you all I know myself. The long, broad walk there," pointing to the sward at their feet, "was once the principal terrace. From it there were wide mar-

ble steps that led to another lower terrace, you can see its long level surface there," and she pointed with her fruit-fork to the second straight lawn that lay beneath the abrupt slope where once the marble steps had been. At each end of this, was a perfectly circular depression that looked like a basin scooped out of the turf.

"Those hollows as well as those further on—on the third terrace—must have held the four fountains known as the *Quatre Gerbes*. In the larger, deeper hollows further on still were the famous *Grand Jet*, *Nappe* and *Grosse Gerbe*. The spring of water that fed them is still in existence under the trees yonder to the right." And she pointed again.

Nelly rose and went to the edge of the first terrace, peering intently down over the steep declivity that led to the second. The modern authorities of the *commune* of Marly had prudently though unpicturesquely railed in the edges of each terrace with wire netting to prevent accidents.

"In the far distance, beyond the large square depression where the women are washing, I can discern a sort of grey stone construction. What is that?" called out Nelly.

Jacqueline rose, too, now with her table napkin in her hand and joined her friend on the green lawn of the terrace. Oliver followed in her wake.

"That's the '*abreuvoir*' or horse pond. I say *is* because of all the edifices of Marly that is all that now remains almost intact. It's a pity we can't see it well from here. I've been shown a picture of it and it's quite worth a special visit. Another day we can go

down through the Allée du Coeur Volant which runs from just outside the Grille Royale to the edge of the '*abreuvoir*' and inspect it for ourselves. . . . It is built of grey stone considerably mellowed down with lichen growth and the patina of age."

"Have the Chevaux de Marly that stand on the top of the Champs Elysées—the Place de la Concorde—anything to do with this particular spot of Marly?" asked Oliver, speaking almost for the first time. He too was profoundly interested in the history of this beautiful spot.

"Of course," said Jacqueline, smiling. "I thought all Parisians knew that! They formed the group of horses sculptured by Costou to stand at the top of the '*abreuvoir*.' . . . It is said that the infuriated population of Marly were about to demolish that fine work of art too, but luckily it was saved by the Revolutionary Committee itself, who gave orders that the whole piece of sculpture should be effectually protected by a strong wooden case nailed down over it. It was thus removed to Paris, and afterwards the groups of horses were placed on either side of the great avenue."

"How interesting all this is! And how clever you are to know it all so well!" exclaimed Nelly for once subdued and awed into comparative attention. Then turning right round in the opposite direction she asked:

"What is that deep slope of lawn right behind the castle surrounded on both sides by thick rows of trees?"

"I think that that must be where the old cascade formerly was," replied Jacqueline. "It was described as being close to the castle. There were about sixty red marble polished slabs set in gradation down the slope over which the water fell 'en chute.' But even in the time of Louis XVI. and some years before the Revolution, the expense of bringing the water to feed the cascade was so great that the politicians of the time refused the necessary credit to the King's budget. So the waterfall was suppressed and the slabs of marble carried away to Paris where they were utilised to repair the nave of the Church of St. Sulpice."

Here Oliver interrupted Jacqueline's explanations.

"I see the 'mothers' making frantic signs to us to go back and boil up some fresh tea!" And as the two girls and young man turned back to cross the terrace he slipped his arm affectionately and fraternally through Jacqueline's and remarked in tender mockery:

"My dear friend, I am so happy to think that we need have no fears for your future. . . . It is quite provided for. . . . All other things failing, you'll make an excellent guide!"

Jacqueline smiled but made no answer.

And the three settled down once more at the feet of the "mothers." As the second brew of tea was in progress which Nelly laughingly declared must serve them for *café noir*, a cyclist passed by behind them on the road.

"Hulloa!" cried Oliver, "I seem to know that

figure. . . . Yes! I thought so! Why—it's Jérôme d'Ablis!"

"Jérôme d'Ablis!" cried Nelly, her eyes in the direction of the speeding figure—"so it is! Call out to him, Oliver, and tell him to come and join us. It *will* be sport!"

As Oliver, who had risen abruptly, was running across the grass towards his friend, Mrs. Brent explained to Françoise and her daughter that Jérôme was a great friend of Oliver's, whom he had known almost from boyhood, when Oliver had lived with the Lerouge family. He was an amateur artist, as well as an *attaché* at the Foreign Affairs, and had a studio next door to Oliver's in the *Quartier*.

It was only when Oliver was close up to him that his friend recognized him.

"*Tiens!—Brent! En voilà une bonne surprise!*" and the young man, jumping lightly off his bicycle, came towards the merry group, cap in hand.

"Let me introduce my friend, Jérôme d'Ablis, to you," said Oliver, leading him toward Françoise after the young man had been cordially welcomed by Mrs. John Brent and Nelly. "Madame Réville and her daughter are very dear friends of ours. We are sharing a cottage here together for the summer," he added, addressing himself to Jérôme.

Jérôme bowed with stiff and rather ceremonious grace as Oliver introduced him. He was a fine-looking young man with dark curly hair and brown-greenish eyes. His even white teeth gleamed beneath a very carefully trimmed moustache each time he smiled,

which was often—for he looked merry and good-natured, and had the graceful, social manners of the young Frenchman of his class and education.

"And what are you doing out here?" asked Oliver. He of course now spoke in French.

"Well, to tell you the truth, *mon cher*, I was having a solitary ride on my bicycle and have got lost! I was making for Marly to get a meal and take the train back to Paris."

"Why, it's nearly eight o'clock now!" chimed in good Mrs. Brent in her atrocious but often picturesque French. "Poor lad! He must be hungry if he's been on his wheel all the afternoon. Haven't you something left in that basket, Nelly?"

Jérôme looked longingly at the basket and at the remains of the meal spread out in confusion on the white cloth. But with characteristic French discretion, which does not understand the spontaneous simplicity of English people when they ask a passing friend to share a meal, he excused himself.

"O, *madame*, you are too kind! I do not wish to trespass on your goodness."

"Nonsense—nonsense, you do not trespass at all!" said Nelly. "On the contrary, there's still plenty to eat and you are most welcome. Look here!" and she held up the articles as she spoke, "here's a fine slice of ham, some beef, some bread and cheese, and one hard egg, besides a little fruit. With a cup of hot tea, that might do duty for a meal, if you will accept it."

"Do duty for a meal!" echoed Jérôme. "Why,

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Sardanapalus himself couldn't have wished for a better!"

"Then come along, Jérôme," cried Oliver, thrusting his arm through that of his friend. "You must be tired. Sit down here," and he pushed Jérôme down on the grass at the feet of Madame Réville and Mrs. Brent.

"The tea's just ready," cried Nelly.

So Jérôme, his bicycle lying on the curb beside him, was added to the merry party.

Jacqueline, who had hardly spoken to the young man, now helped her friend Nelly in plying him with all the dainty remnants that were still in the basket. It was she who drew a whole large spoonful of the tomato salad from the depths of the stone jar. This was turned out on to Jérôme's plate, and he ate up everything they gave him heartily. Soon the tea was finished and the basket, now quite empty, repacked, and the two young men drew out their cigarettes, while the fuller-toned colours faded in the evening sky. Bright blue became faint turquoise, and red-gold a rosy lemon, while deep violet merged into a more misty amethyst. Night was beginning to fall. The women of the party put on their light summer cloaks, and all began reluctantly to think of going home.

On the way back, Jérôme, who accompanied them, rolling his bicycle along as he walked, explained that his parents, with whom he lived, were at the present season at their château in Touraine, so that he was therefore alone in Paris. He had been forced to re-

main behind alone for another month to attend to some business at the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

"Then come and spend the rest of your time of loneliness down here with us," cried Mrs. Brent spontaneously turning towards Madame Réville, for a confirmation of her invitation—which Françoise could not refuse. "We've got a spare room at *Les Peupliers*, and I am sure Paris is stifling now. We are so near to St. Lazare that you can run in to town whenever you like."

Again Jérôme was puzzled, though touched, by such kind hospitality. But he answered hesitatingly.

"*Je suis confus*, I do not know what to answer you. I am afraid of being in the way——" He stopped hesitatingly once more, and his eyes fell and rested on Jacqueline with bewilderment.

"Answer 'Yes,'" said good Mrs. Brent, "and you'll please us all. Won't he?" she said, addressing herself to the rest of the company.

"Yes—yes!" cried Nelly.

Françoise and Jacqueline were less boisterous in their insistence, but, realizing that Jérôme d'Ablis was evidently a great and intimate friend of the Brents, they both graciously begged him to stay.

"You are such an old—very old friend of Oliver's . . . Why you've known one another since you were almost boys," pursued Mrs. Brent, addressing Jérôme again. "Your parents are far away, and you are alone. It will be far better for you to be with us than to go cycling around Paris all alone in a fresh direction each day and then get lost!"

"*Allons, est-ce entendu?*" queried Nelly.

"I am really more grateful than I can say," began Jérôme, still hesitating and looking towards Oliver.

For though Oliver liked Jérôme personally and found him a most entertaining companion, he had added but a weak insistence to his aunt's and sister's kindly urgings. He knew that Jérôme was unaccustomed to the society of young girls and though the hoyden Nelly had nothing to fear from the young Frenchman, he wondered whether Madame Réville—had she known Jérôme better—would have cared to have him for any lengthy period in close touch with her daughter. But alas! he felt himself powerless to resist the current of events and it was impossible for him, being the only man of the party, not to confirm his aunt's invitation. Above all he was prompted by the instinctive British loathing of appearing inhospitable. So he answered his friend's mute appeal resolutely:

"Of course you must agree to come" he said. "Now that's enough, that's enough, *mon vieux*," he added as Jérôme proceeded to thank Mrs. Brent in polite and flowery language. "Now it's understood. You come to us to-morrow evening with your valise and your bicycle. Your room will be quite ready for you. As you are good at games, you'll be the special delight of my sister, who is always in want of a new partner."

So it was arranged. And Jérôme d'Ablis was added to the party at *Les Peupliers*.

CHAPTER X

JÉRÔME D'ABLIIS, a charming young *filz de famille* of about thirty, was at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs awaiting with laudable resignation his future appointment to some diplomatic post. The sole ambition of his wealthy parents was that their son should enter *La Carrière*, as the Diplomatic Service is called in France. But so far his nomination had been a difficult thing to obtain, for the d'Ablis family was old and aristocratic, and had only lately been converted to Republicanism. Formerly *La Carrière* was recruited almost exclusively from among the families of the old French aristocracy. But since the sons of Republicans had begun to enter the ranks of candidates, it had become more difficult for descendants of the old French *noblesse* to obtain appointments, even to the lesser posts in this *Administration d'État*.

Jérôme, who was a most accomplished and distinguished type of the young society man of Paris, had been waiting patiently, contenting himself with his small unremunerated post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the hope that some day influential friends of his father's would be able to secure him a billet. Lately a new Minister had come into power who was less drastic in his dealings with the members of the older nobility, and some hope was now entertained of a possible ending to Jérôme's long probation.

But meanwhile the young man had found the

pleasures which Paris offers to the attractive and distinguished bachelor most alluring. The period of his waiting had been anything but dull. Society hostesses of all classes welcomed him with effusion. He was a favourite anywhere—in the restricted social circles of the Faubourg as well as in the Republican officialdom. He was not only extremely goodlooking, but he was most entertaining and useful to hostesses of all classes, being an excellent leader of cotillons as well as a brilliant conversationalist. He was an amateur musician too and at times dabbled in literature, for now and again he wrote short, rather insipid, but very finely polished articles in the *Figaro* or in one of the monthly reviews. Above all, he had a decided taste for painting. In order to work more seriously at Art he had taken some years before—while Oliver still lived with the Lerouge family—a studio not only in the same block as Oliver's, but actually next door to it, so that only a thin wall divided them. By such close neighbourhood he hoped to reap many advantages from Oliver's superior guidance. Jérôme himself had a pretty talent, but was a sincere admirer of Oliver's and was proud to call himself Oliver's great friend. Often Jérôme would rap on the dividing wall, and call out to his friend to invite him to lunch or to beg him to come into his studio and criticize his work. Oliver, who was a far more serious-minded person, was often amused by Jérôme's absurd and childish gaiety, and found him a clever as well as a most entertaining companion, although the light frivolity of Jérôme's

mind precluded all possibility of any very deep friendship between the two men.

But though Jérôme was on familiar terms with Oliver, he never invited him to the house of his parents, and indeed he never introduced Oliver to his father and mother at all. Like many young Frenchmen of his class and education, he kept his family relations entirely separate from his external and social life. His friends—even the most intimate—met him at his club or at various cafés, or called to see him in his studio, and though he lived at home, his parents knew but few of his friends and acquaintances. At times Jérôme, after a long night's carousing at various cafés or at his club did not return to the parental roof at all. He would then go to sleep at his studio, which was provided with a divan bed that was always made and ready for occupation, beneath its sumptuous draperies or oriental embroideries. The *concierge* of the building acted as sort of general servant to all the occupants of the studios—very few of which were inhabited as living rooms—so that on those evenings when Jérôme repaired to his studio to finish up the night, the *concierge* brought him up his coffee ready made from the *loge* in the morning. It happened occasionally that Jérôme was not alone when he thus returned to his studio for the night and was accompanied by some charming companion, to whom the *concierge* would act as *femme de chambre* in the morning. But this occurred rarely. His feminine acquaintances were mostly of a higher social order. They generally came in the afternoon,

between five and seven, darkly gowned and closely veiled, stepping furtively from a closed cab with drawn blinds, and gliding quickly down the long corridor upon which the doors of the studio opened.

The proximity of his friend's studio might at times have been an annoyance to Jérôme had he been really concerned about keeping the fair names of the ladies who called at his studio entirely untarnished. But Jérôme, alas! was very careless of these reputations, treating them too lightly in Oliver's more austere opinion.

When he was discussing with Oliver one day, much against Brent's own taste—for he disliked Jérôme's confidences and generally managed to avoid them—the visit of an Italian Princess of great and renowned family the previous afternoon, Oliver stopped him with a gesture of reproach and impatience, and asked him if he were not ashamed of compromising so unblemished a *prestige*.

"Bah!" said Jérôme lightly, as he brushed upwards the shining points of his bronze-coloured moustache. "Bah! Let them defend themselves! The dear things, they know what they risk when they come to my studio"

Oliver was silent. A dull red flush spread over his face.

"I do not look at these things as you do, evidently," he began.

"*Angliche pudibond, va!*" interjected Jérôme.

"But among them all, these women who have compromised themselves for you, has there never been

one for whom you truly cared, and whom you consider worthy of your respect and chivalry?"

Jérôme shrugged his shoulders.

"One owes neither respect nor chivalry to women who accept such assignations as mine. They know I'm not in earnest, and they are not in earnest themselves. Besides, one owes respect to but one woman in one's life—one's own wife. None of the others count!"

"We evidently don't feel the same way in these matters," said Oliver stiffly.

Jérôme carelessly shrugged his shoulders once more and muttered something more about English prudery.

"It seems to me that whatever women do, they ought to be treated with consideration—and more especially still by the very man who ruins them. For women have the worst of it in every way, and always."

"*Oh, mon cher,*" said Jérôme impatiently, "you've missed your vocation! You ought not to have been an artist, but a Protestant parson. That was your bent, my friend." And Jérôme, laughing at Oliver's serious face, lit another cigarette, and turned the conversation to other subjects.

Yet Oliver, for all his austere disapproval of Jérôme's ways with women, had a genuine liking for the young Frenchman. At an early stage of their acquaintance—and this was long before he had any knowledge of Jérôme's promiscuous lovemaking among society ladies—Brent had invited his friend to his aunt's house. Here Jérôme had become a great favourite.

Nelly amused him greatly. She appealed to him as if she were a bright young boy companion—not a woman at all. And Nelly, healthy-minded and full of genuine fun, though she liked Jérôme, to a certain extent, yet often made him the butt of her raillery and teasing. What she termed his “namby-pamby ways” caused her much merriment. Though brave in many ways, for he would not have hesitated an instant to go out upon *le terrain*, had he been called out by one of the husbands of the veiled and furtive-footed ladies who sometimes visited his studio, yet he nearly fainted with horror at the sight of a mouse, and he could not bear bodily discomfort of any kind without complaining like a child. One day Nelly nearly forced Jérôme into a thorough exhibition of temper, when she put one of her pink-eyed white mice on his shoulder. The shriek of horror which he gave upon that occasion was treasured up by Nelly, who repeated it in mockery each time she wished to try his patience to the utmost.

And now at *Les Peupliers* there were four young people to go out for long walks together. To Jérôme—who, being brought up in the most approved French fashion, had many men friends but had never been brought into contact with a young girl before—Jacqueline was destined to be a revelation. He had always wondered what an unmarried girl was like. He had met a few in his mother’s *salon*, and they had seemed to him mysterious, inexplicable and silent creatures whose own reserve built an impenetrable barrier around them. For him, they were

forbidden fruit. One must not approach them except with matrimonial intentions, and, as he had not begun to contemplate marriage yet, any friendship or companionship with them was of course impossible. In Jérôme's opinion, a woman was only a woman once she was married, and a *jeune fille* was a strange hybrid creature he did not understand at all and was inclined rather to fear. Thus the easy and kindly hospitality of the Brents had been the means of putting him for the first time in his life, in touch with that curious, tantalising and hitherto unknown mystery, a *vraie jeune fille*. This for a young Frenchman of Jérôme's class and education was indeed an almost unhopèd-for interest. He was at last not only able to meet but to be in daily contact with one of those perplexing, ambiguous creatures who had always possessed the attraction of the enigmatic for him.

How interesting it was going to be—to be allowed to be near one at last—to be able to touch her, to breathe the same air as she did! Were they as immaculately innocent as they were supposed to be—these *jeunes filles*—even under the guarding wing and vigilant eye of their mothers, separated by customs, habits and conventions from all male humanity, preserved untouched for the exclusive delight and ownership of one lucky man—the husband, the initiator of all knowledge? Nelly Brent, with her frank, open, unconventional freedom of speech and action, as well as her lack of coquetry and of mystery, had never appealed to Jérôme with the charm of the *jeune fille*. She seemed to him no more than a young

lad full of spirits, fun, and exuberance. But this quiet, reserved, languid-eyed Jacqueline, so *troublante* with golden hair, fresh mouth and its elusive, caressing smile—attracted him in an inexplicable manner!

For the first few days of his visit, Jérôme d'Ablis was ill at ease in her presence. He did not know—to use his own expression—“*sur quel pied danser*”—on which foot to dance. He was afraid of making mistakes, of frightening, and so of offending, her, and of alienating her interest entirely. His attentions were therefore tentative, and most measured and he was most careful of his speech, fearing that he might displease or hurt her. But by degrees the ice thawed between them, and seeing Jacqueline's simple friendly attitude with Oliver, Jérôme felt reassured and became more confident. Then he made a few advances, and mustered up sufficient courage to speak to her, and when he did he was astonished to find that she answered him either quite simply or perhaps even coquettishly, just like any other woman. So by degrees, the diffidence she had inspired him with diminished and finally disappeared, and they became great friends, on the same footing as she was with Oliver. As his company did not seem to displease her, he arranged to be her own special companion during their long walks. He soon discovered what were the subjects that interested her most, and—a clever and brilliant *causeur*—he kept to them, taking every opportunity of charming her with his witty sallies.

But as the days progressed Jacqueline surprised

Jérôme. He had not expected to find a *jeune fille* who knew so much, who could converse upon almost every subject whether it were art, literature, history, politics, or even sociology. Were all *jeunes filles* alike, he wondered, or was Mademoiselle Réville a most exceptional one? Certainly he had never been given to understand that the *jeunes filles* of to-day were so competent in the art of conversation. Jérôme was more and more bewildered, and his amazement grew into deeper admiration, and his admiration into a yet greater desire to please, and finally his own desire to please into a love-interest of which he would have thought himself incapable a few weeks before.

Jacqueline herself soon became aware of the attraction she had for him and, flattered and amused by his evident admiration, now allowed all her instincts of coquetry to rise rampant once more.

Since she had been sitting to Oliver for her portrait, her attitude towards the young painter had somewhat veered round. Before this period she had looked upon Oliver as a simple young Englishman slightly *gauche* in his dealings with women, and as a *bon camarade* when she was in her best moods, though she found him difficult to flirt with at all times. But since the long *tête-à-têtes* in the studio and the conversations upon so many subjects of interest to both painter and model, Oliver had shown her many new sides of his character and his mentality which had revealed him in quite a new light before the critical tribunal of her exacting mind. They had become close, and even very dear friends, for Jac-

queline's heart could only be touched through the medium of her brain. She had been so intellectually trained that she considered mental culture as the highest of all attributes that might claim to attract her. Not even perfect beauty appealed to her yet so completely as brilliancy of the intellect. 'And beneath his cold and reserved demeanour Oliver had proved to her the unquestionable superiority of his mind.

Oliver had never yet betrayed his love to Jacqueline, and although he felt that he had won her friendship he dared not yet hope that he had reached the tenderer feelings of her heart. And he neither reasoned out his conduct nor laid plans, but allowed matters to drift as they would, trusting in the days to come when Jacqueline would awake to love. He had hoped that the expression he had painted in her portrait would have revealed her to herself. But though her mother, in her ever-vigilant tenderness, had discovered the dawn of true womanhood in the eyes of the picture and knew what message they told of Oliver's love for his model, Jacqueline herself, if she had perceived any revelation, had not yet understood its significance. She admired the picture, and she felt deference and respect for Oliver for having been able to summarize her own extrinsic personality so well, but she had not been able to read the supreme message of Oliver's love which the portrait itself conveyed.

But now with Jérôme's advent her interest was by degrees drawn away from Oliver and new emotions

were forcing themselves, almost against her will, into her youthful sensibility. And he—Jérôme—perceiving her feelings, long before she had entirely realized them herself, determined to lose no time in storming the citadel of her heart. For Jérôme's motto in his dealings with women was "lose no time." He was at this particular moment free from all intrigue. His latest passion—the Italian princess—had returned to her castle in Tuscany, leaving him free and as heart-whole as ever.

The days at *Les Peupliers* would have seemed long and empty to him, had not Jacqueline been there, for he did not care for any of the childish games that Nelly suggested, and he had always distrusted that young lady's playful jokes since the episode of the white mouse. But the strange young girl who was so different from all his preconceived ideas concerning the *jeune fille*, interested him enormously, and made him accept the somewhat dull pleasures of *Les Peupliers* almost with enthusiasm.

At first he spent most of his mornings in the studio watching the progress of Oliver's pictures, but Oliver soon discovered that his presence disturbed the sittings and altered the expression of his model, and though Jérôme amused Jacqueline—indeed, precisely because he amused her—Oliver forbade him the entrance to the tower.

As Jérôme was unable to make love to Jacqueline in the mornings, he determined to get even with Oliver during the long walks in the afternoons. He remained always close to Jacqueline upon these occa-

sions, and soon the charm of his attractive personality began to work more definitely upon her emotions. By degrees she ceased to be merely coquettish with him, being captivated in her turn, and finally to her astonishment discovered that she had been caught in the meshes of her own deftly-spread net.

Jacqueline, theoretically aware of most things in life, had never yet been in love. Like many young girls who have developed on the mental rather than upon the emotional plane, she believed herself to be incapable of feeling the tender passion. But Jérôme had determined now to awaken her. The slim, nervous creature, hitherto so conscious of self, with her quick perceptive brain and cultured mind, had a tantalising charm for him. It seemed to him a delightful task to bring into those gay and mocking eyes the shadow of that womanly tenderness which Oliver's picture suggested but which Oliver himself—"l'Angliche pudibond!"—as Jérôme always disdainfully called him—had failed to evoke in reality. And though Jérôme set himself deliberately to gain Jacqueline's love, yet it was with a certain amount of involuntary personal emotion. By her terrible coquetry, she had unconsciously aroused a genuine passion in Jérôme's heart. Because of her alert intelligence, he believed her to be more fully possessed of knowledge and experience of life than she really was, while her beguilements, though consciously willed and directed by her, were yet unconscious of their own powers. They were in reality quite innocent and childlike and totally ignorant of their own mean-

ing. The girl did not even know what fires she was lighting with her winning smiles. While Jérôme believed her to be a fully-developed and conscious coquette, she was in reality as a child playing with forces which would finally assail and overwhelm it. Neither did Jérôme for a moment suppose that he was the first with whom she had measured her steel. Because of her obvious knowledge and intelligence he took her to be a thoroughly practised flirt. He never realized that though her mind had been cultivated, her emotions were still completely undeveloped, and she herself was incapable of explaining this to him since she was ignorant of the depth and meaning of those new emotions. He never dreamt that the game between them was unequal at the start, or understood her immaturity since she had the outward appearance of the skilled coquette.

At the same time, Jérôme himself never stopped to consider what might be the end of this holiday idyll. Although he knew that Jacqueline Réville was a lady by birth and education, he believed that she had little or no fortune and that she would never be accepted as a daughter-in-law by his own father and mother for that reason. Therefore not for one moment did it enter his mind to ask her hand in marriage. To his idea she offered the chance of a pleasant episode—that was all.

That he was forced to conceal this flirtation from his host and hostesses at *Les Peupliers* seemed to him quite natural. Was he not always forced to play a part in all his *affaires de coeur* in view of the legitimate wrath

of irate husbands? He therefore instinctively and more particularly hid his courtship from Madame Réville and Oliver. By this attitude he might have brought disturbance into the mind of Jacqueline, had not she herself, for the first time in her life, lost her head. Yet the fact of Jérôme's clever concealment of his emotions before her mother and friends somewhat alarmed her in those moments when her vision was clear. She was too proud to ask an explanation of it from Jérôme himself, yet too unsophisticated in matters of love to dream of any *arriere-pensée* in his mind. It is true that each time they were alone he made violent protestations of his love for her, and extolled her charms in delightful and poetic terms. But of marriage he made no mention, and poor Jacqueline was now so deeply disturbed that she took but little notice of this omission.

She lived thus in an emotional torpor. Oliver had now nearly finished the portrait, indeed there had been but five or six sittings necessary after Jérôme's arrival at *Les Peupliers*. So, while Oliver was beginning a new picture in his tower and Nelly was amusing herself in the garden with "Rip," and trying to improve his education, Jacqueline and Jérôme would wander off into the woods at the back of the house on plea of seeking wild flowers to adorn the table at luncheon; and during these warm sunny mornings Jérôme made the most of his opportunities, and Jacqueline allowed herself to be courted.

Suddenly Oliver became uneasy. Once at table he had seen Jérôme's glance set on Jacqueline, and

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the girl's eyes respond to his. Oliver experienced such pain at the revelation of their expression that all the latent brute that slumbers in the heart of every Anglo-Saxon arose fierce within him, and his first instinct was to kick Jérôme out of the house. When he heard his kindly aunt renew her invitation once more to Jérôme, pressing him to remain as their guest a few days more till the end of the month, his heart sank within him.

And yet another pair of anxious eyes watched the small tragedy that was being enacted during the peaceful holidays at *Les Peupliers*. Françoise, observing her daughter, saw that some deep emotion was astir in the heart of her darling. She even saw the look that Oliver had painted in Jacqueline's depicted eyes, beginning to dawn in the face of her beloved child; and she set herself to watch—to watch with keen vigilance.

One evening towards the end of the holidays, when the long, hot summer day was at an end and the moon was full in the sky, Nelly proposed a walk after dinner through the secluded alleys of the lovely woods behind the house, where Jacqueline and Jérôme had been flower-hunting in the morning. It was the last day of Jérôme's stay, for he was leaving for Touraine the following evening. They all started off in pairs, the two "mothers"—Mrs. Brent and Madame Réville—Nelly and Oliver, followed by Rip in quest of stones to be thrown along the road for him to run after, and Jérôme and Jacqueline lingering a long way behind, apart from the others and evidently keen

to enjoy total solitude. But at a pause in a dell where the first two couples were resting to view the moonlight scene, Françoise drew Jacqueline aside and almost for the first time in her life, chided her gently.

"My dearest, you should not stay so far behind with Monsieur d'Ablis and for so long a time. It is not *convenable*."

"*Convenable!* dearest *maman*," exclaimed Jacqueline, smiling indulgently upon her parent. "You did not bring me up to consider *les convenances* at every turn—did you? I have always done just as I liked, and I have always walked out alone for years. Why not now? Surely I can take care of myself! Why this sudden reversion to the old bogies of your own education? '*Les convenances!*' But, my dearest mother, it's the first time that I have heard you invoke them!

"Surely if I like to walk alone with Monsieur Jérôme to enjoy his conversation exclusively, you cannot try to oppose me now! It's too late, sweet mother!"

And seeing that Françoise in the weakness of her love was ready to relent at once, Jacqueline continued:

"Don't worry about me, *maman chérie*. You know that I am always capable of taking care of myself!"

So saying she kissed her mother lightly on the cheek, and went off gaily back along the path to meet Jérôme, who was coming to claim her once more.

The memory of that evening was to remain for many months in Jacqueline's mind for Jérôme dared

to plead with her as he had never dared to plead before.

"I leave here to-morrow, sweet Jacqueline, and shall not see you again till you all return to Paris. I've spent these adorable four weeks here with you and now my parents want me to finish up my holiday with them in Touraine. In less than three weeks' time, you will be back in Paris again. Won't you promise me now, that you will come and see me one day at my studio?"

Jacqueline was *troublée* but strangely flattered at this invitation. She hesitated some moments before replying, partly because of her innate coquetry which urged her to make the gift of her promise more precious by a seeming refusal, and partly because her instinctive fear was aroused. Despite the fact that she had almost lost her head she was still conscious that the careful secrecy of Jérôme's lovemaking implied that something was reprehensible. Yet so profoundly moved was she that she stifled the nascent distrust in her heart, allowing herself to be lulled into a quiescent delight in the man's mere nearness, and would not let herself to be persuaded by her better judgment.

"Well! Jacqueline! Won't you say 'yes'?"

Jacqueline still demurred, her surer intuition momentarily gaining the upper hand in her mind.

"I might perhaps go with Nelly, of course . . ."

"No . . . no. . . . Don't bring Nelly, dearest. . . . We don't want that bouncing tom-boy between us! No—come to me alone, my Jacque-

line, and let me feel myself in solitude with you in the heart of the world!"

"Dear Monsieur Jérôme, you know that that is almost impossible. I go out alone only to the Sorbonne."

"Then come one day when you are supposed to be at the Sorbonne!"

And observing her persistent hesitation, he added, drawing her arm caressingly through his and feeling her slim body quiver at his touch: "Dearest, dearest Jacqueline, you are not an ignorant child! We are neither of us children. We know life. We find pleasure in one another's company, do we not? Then what harm is there in our meeting together at my studio? We are here together alone and constantly, are we not?"

"Yes . . ." said Jacqueline, trembling in all her limbs as she felt her power of resistance abandoning her, "but . . ."

"Don't say 'but,' dearest Jacqueline! I want to feel you near me—with me—out of reach of all. Here I cannot speak to you without fear of being interrupted either by your mother or the estimable but rather dull Oliver, or that good Nelly yonder!"

"But what have you to say that is so secret?" laughed Jacqueline, all her instinctive coquetry aroused and dominant in her eyes.

Jérôme drew still nearer to her, and gently slid his arm round her waist. They were alone in the wonderful moonlight, in the fragrant night under the gentle swaying of the trees, lulled by the song of the breezes. All his youth went out to her and met her

youth. He bent his head over hers, till his lips almost touched the gold of her hair. Into his deep embrace he folded her yielding, supple figure as he whispered—or rather breathed—into her too willing ear:

“You know what I have to say to you, my Jacqueline! What does a young man ever want to say to a young and beautiful woman? I want to tell you how much I love you—Jacqueline——”

And Jacqueline closing her eyes gently let Jérôme’s soft words sink down deep into her heart, permeating her very soul with their irresistible sweetness. . . . Her tremulous lips were parted in a half smile. Her delicate nostrils palpitated with emotion.

Alas!—Jacqueline was awakened now! There was no willed coquetry in her heart any longer—only submission to true emotion—to love, the great, the almighty conqueror! Into her eyes now rose again that marvelling wonder which had transformed her in Oliver’s picture.

Gently Jérôme drew her face upward to his, and then softly—reverently, too—he laid his lips upon her closed eyelids. . . .

“You *will* come?” he murmured passionately.

“Yes,” she whispered in reply, with an almost imperceptible pressure of her hand upon his arm.

Then Nelly’s voice broke ruthlessly through the hallowed music of the silence which had seemed to surround them together in the moonlit spaces.

“Come, you two loiterers! We’re all going home. Where are you?”

The spell was broken. Jacqueline and Jérôme returned back once more into reality.

CHAPTER XI

It was the end of October. The Brents had long before returned to their flat in the Boulevard Raspail and Françoise and her daughter had also taken up their winter quarters once more. Jacqueline, who intended going in for a *Licence* in two years' time, had resumed her studies and followed several of the *cours de littérature* at the Sorbonne most assiduously. Yet she still saw the Brents almost every day, both Oliver and Nelly. As for Mrs. Brent, who could never find any occupation to keep her at home, she would cross Paris in two omnibuses to arrive at Françoise's flat about three o'clock in the afternoon and would sit with her until five or six o'clock, while Françoise sewed by the side of the fire. Jacqueline, with her various *cours* at the Sorbonne, and her private lessons with a Lycée professor with whom she was preparing the programme of special subjects selected for the *Licence* that year, was often away from home. Like most students who are in process of preparation for a degree, she went diligently through the entire course of study each year as if she herself were to be among the candidates so as to gain some knowledge of what her future ordeal was to be. Françoise was now quite used to her daughter's long absences, but she kept a careful note of her daughter's time-table and was always terribly anxious whenever she was two or three minutes late after the *cours* of the day was over.

At present she was delighted to see Jacqueline so greatly interested in her work, apparently only thinking of her *Licence*. She supposed that her daughter's flirtation with Jérôme d'Ablis had therefore come to nothing, and she was happy in that conviction. But in reality, Jacqueline's spirits were buoyed up only with the thought of seeing Jérôme again soon. She had not yet summoned up the courage to keep her promise to go to see him at his studio. At least she did not dare to go of her own free will. Yet the thought of Jérôme never left her. She had not seen him now for more than six weeks, nor had she news of him. But her passion had grown rather than decreased during this period of separation. Twenty times a day she found herself obsessed with his memory. Now that love had come to her, it had come complete. She was a girl no longer. She was a woman. All the energy which had ripened in her hitherto and made of her the self-willed, assertive creature that she was, was transformed now into the force which nourished her love for Jérôme. She was as completely, as absolutely whole-hearted at present in her passion as she had been whole-hearted before in her studies. All her being now was emotion. She was no longer a creature of intellect or of reason. The deep sources of feeling in her heart, that so far had never been touched, were now so profoundly upheaved that she herself hardly realized or understood the turmoil which was going on within her. She performed all her duties concerning her studies perfunctorily, almost without any brainwork at all. In order

to conceal her secret from the careful watching eyes of her mother, she practised the most subtle deceit, feigning a devotion to her work which was the reverse of the truth. Often when Françoise believed her to be safe at some *cours* at the Sorbonne, she was in reality walking about in her dreamland amid the flowery paths of the Luxembourg Gardens. At home, while Françoise believed her to be poring over her books in the privacy of her own room, she was in reality lounging in an armchair close to the fire, gazing into the ruddy glow, thinking over the last days of her *séjour* at *Les Peupliers* and of Jérôme's charming love-making.

Yet there were hours when Françoise's vigilant love began to arise in fear and obscure forebodings. Her devotion to Jacqueline was so great that she herself almost unconsciously felt the emotions that were assailing her child. But strive as she might, she could detect no fact which might lead her to understand what was taking place in Jacqueline's heart. So she allowed her vague and nameless fears to be lulled into quietude, even against her intuition, by Jacqueline's evident devotion to her studies.

The Brents once more received their friends and acquaintances of the *Quartier* every Sunday evening, and Françoise and Jacqueline attended most of these weekly receptions, at the hospitable home of the Boulevard Raspail. As was to be expected, one fateful Sunday, Jérôme d'Ablis was there, so the hour for which Jacqueline had so long hoped came at last. It was evident that it was a genuine pleasure for him

to see Françoise and her daughter again. Nevertheless, during the six weeks which had just elapsed he had made many wise resolutions, regarding his intentions concerning Jacqueline, and had determined to discontinue his attentions entirely, yet during the few minutes' private conversation he had been able to have with her while tea was being served in the Brents' dining-room, all her former charm for him was renewed, and before he could stop himself he had reminded her of her promise to come and see him at his studio. At the very first sight of her in Mrs. Brent's salon, Jérôme had realized that all his good intentions would count for nothing, and that he was more than ever *épris*, for Jacqueline seemed more than ever alluring. In her pale blue silk gown, cut in a point at the neck, showing to perfection her long, lily-white throat, she was indeed a charming apparition. Her bright curls lifted onto the crown of her head, and held there with small pearl combs, her long, slim waist, her beautiful languid movements, all made up an *ensemble* of such grace, that Jérôme's renewed infatuation was only too easy to understand. But what made him lose his head completely was the tender look that came in Jacqueline's velvety eyes whenever they met his. What could be more touching, more enthralling than that glance? Was it not sufficient to turn any man's head? Yet Jérôme, mindful of his worldly interests above all other considerations, when he had felt himself far from Jacqueline's enchanting presence—had spent most of the time which had passed since his return from *Les Peupliers* in

making various inquiries as to Mademoiselle Réville's fortune. He knew that many rich heiresses were brought up in comparative simplicity. Madame Réville's "*train de vie*" was modest and unpretentious, that was true, but it might be that Mademoiselle Jacqueline had some rich aunts or uncles with "*espérances*." There might just be the chance of some great inheritance coming to her, and certainly she was of all the *jeune filles* he had ever met, the most desirable one for a wife. What a charming companion she would be; and what a wife for a diplomatist! He might perhaps some day—if fortune favoured him—be an ambassador! What a gracious *ambassadrice* she would make! But before speaking to his parents, he had assiduously sought to discover all information concerning Madame Réville's financial position, and to his dismay he learnt that Jacqueline's mother was not rich. An income of about twelve thousand francs was all she had, and she lived with comparative economy. It is true that someone who professed to know some distant relations of Françoise Réville's had told him that Jacqueline had inherited a fortune independently of her mother. This knowledge gave him some hope, and he saw future visions of delight in which Jacqueline, magnificently dowered, had suddenly become the very *fiancée* whom his mother herself had so often dreamed of for her son's wife. But after some investigation he had been assured that even that fortune amounted but to about two hundred thousand francs—quite an inadequate sum. For what was such a dowry com-

pared to the million francs which his parents considered themselves entitled to demand, when his pending diplomatic appointment should have become an accomplished thing? So Jérôme had weighed all pros and cons during these weeks of reflection, and reluctantly had come to the conclusion that he could never marry Jacqueline, not even broach the subject of a marriage with her to his parents. For they would never consent to receive so impecunious a bride to bear their name, and to share the brilliant fortunes of their son. For later on, after their death, Jérôme himself would inherit their own considerable property.

No; Jacqueline was not for him, at least legitimately. He had even resigned himself to try and forget her, when fortune had led him up once more to the Brents' hospitable dining-room. He had intended allowing some considerable time to elapse before meeting his hosts of *Les Peupliers* again. But Mrs. Brent, returning from a walk, had met him on the Boulevard St. Michel almost at her own door, and insisted on his appearance at her next reception. So Jérôme told himself that Fate held him in her web, when he found himself looking into the luminous depths of Jacqueline's love-lit eyes again, and wishing madly that he might have the right of kissing her soft eyelids once more.

"You will come—Jacqueline—won't you? You know you promised me in the wood, in the moonlight. Didn't you? Surely you would not go back upon that sacred promise—given in our dear woods. Would you?" . . .

"Yes," murmured Jacqueline, white to the lips. "Yes—I know I promised. But," . . . and she lingered over words . . . "but, it is not right you know . . . it is not right . . ."

"But are you not free? Can you not do as you wish?" he insisted. "What does your independence mean to you if you cannot use it when you will?"

"Jérôme . . . dearest . . . I am afraid. . . . I never thought I should say such a thing. But it is true . . . I am afraid. . . ."

"Afraid? Of what? Not of me, *ma bien-aimée*?" he murmured gently as he breathed over her hair. She sat in the dim shadow of a palm-tree that almost hid them from view beneath its swaying branches.

"No . . . not of you . . . but of both of us . . . Jérôme . . ."

and her voice lingered loving over his name.

Jérôme caught her hand and made a motion as if to draw her to him, but he gently released her and stood upright at once—seeing Oliver approach them from afar with a look of disturbed concern on his face.

"Remember, I have your promise"—he managed to whisper, as Oliver drew near. "I shall expect you on Wednesday about three . . . remember, you have promised. . . ."

As Oliver approached them, something in Jacqueline's attitude struck a chill in his heart. He was very grave when he spoke to her.

"Jacqueline, your mother is asking for you. I think she has a headache and wants to go home."

Jacqueline hurriedly said good-bye to the two young men, and sped over to her mother's side.

"What a pity I can't marry her," murmured Jérôme to himself as he watched Jacqueline moving across the room. "*Quel dommage!*"

Oliver looked at Jérôme intently, and for a few minutes he was silent. He seemed to be trying to probe the young man's brain.

"Well, Oliver! Why that scowl?" asked Jérôme, laughing, as he turned towards him and met his gaze.

"Oh! Did I scowl!" said Oliver casually. And without any further excuse and turning his back upon his friend, he went out into the hall to help Françoise and Jacqueline to put on their cloaks.

"If I thought you were blackguard enough to mean any harm to Jacqueline, I'd thrash you like a hound," Oliver said to himself as he turned his back on Jérôme.

And he resolved to watch over Jacqueline and over Jérôme too.

On the following Wednesday afternoon, Oliver was painting in his studio. Presumably Jérôme d'Ablis was likewise engaged next door. When Oliver had returned to his work after lunch, he had met Jérôme in the corridor, who passed by him with a nod, and entered his own studio carrying divers small parcels. Now whenever Oliver saw Jérôme laden with white paper daintily tied-up parcels, he knew that these contained cakes and fruit, and that therefore Jérôme was expecting some special visitor to tea during the

afternoon. But the two men had exchanged no words. For some subtle yet inexplicable reason, Oliver did not feel well disposed towards Jérôme at this moment, and Jérôme himself did not seem to pay any attention to Oliver's silence. He knew Oliver to be a *drôle d'Angliche* and given to moods. The two men had therefore locked themselves up each in his own studio.

As the weather became rather dark towards three o'clock, Oliver, who had been hard at work ever since he had returned from lunch, crossed to the window to pull up the blinds. As he stood there he saw a closed cab draw up to the door, and a woman, thickly veiled, get out.

"Doubtless Jérôme's visitor," he muttered to himself angrily, shrugging his shoulders in disgust. He was about to leave the window and return to his easel, when the lady who had occupied the cab turned round to pay the cabman. Something familiar in her silhouette struck him at once. She was dressed in a dark blue coat and skirt and wore a wide-brimmed felt hat to match. Over this was closely tied a very thick black veil. The driver having received his fare the lady walked into the building. There was no mistaking the carriage and "allure" of that figure. It was Jacqueline Réville!

At first Oliver could not repress a movement of delight. It was evident that Jacqueline was coming to see him, to bring some message from her mother probably. . . . Yet! . . . That was unlikely . . . ! Madame Réville would hardly

send Jacqueline alone to his studio and, besides, he knew that the young girl usually attended a lecture with Nelly every Wednesday from half-past two to half-past three o'clock. But then why was Jacqueline coming into the house? For it was certain that she *was* coming in. . . . There was her light step on the stair . . . almost at his threshold. . . .

He sprang towards the entrance and waited for her knock. . . . But she brushed past. . . . Close up against the door-post he could hear her furtive movements, and the swish of her skirts quite distinctly. . . . But was he not dreaming? . . . Was not the door of the studio next to his being opened gently . . . stealthily . . . ? Ah! another had watched her arrival too! . . . Yet for one more instant the mad hope held him that she had made a mistake . . . would discover her error and return to his studio. . . . But no! Oliver had heard Jérôme's door open wider and more cautiously and then close suddenly again. And a swift rushing noise of skirts over the threshold indicated that Jacqueline had passed into the next room.

"Great God!"

So the scoundrel had inveigled even her to his lair where so many others—light women and unfaithful wives—had gone before! . . . Was no woman sacred to him then? She was there—Jacqueline—talking to Jérôme d'Ablis, standing close to him, perhaps clasped in his arms allowing him to caress her even! Paugh! The mere thought drove Oliver mad

and flinging all sense of delicacy to the winds, in his wild instinct he sprang towards the thin partition that divided the studios. But almost as suddenly he sprang back again to the middle of the room, ashamed at the thought of playing the spy! . . . But he could not help straining every nerve to catch the slightest sounds from the next room. . . . He listened again in anguish. There was no sound. . . . All was silent, terribly silent. Yet, Jacqueline and Jérôme were there together and alone! Ah! God! To be so helpless! . . .

Poor Oliver sank down into the chair before his easel and almost moaned aloud in his despair! . . .

When Jacqueline arrived at Jérôme's door—the fourth door on the right of the corridor—for long before he had explained that to her so she could make no mistake when she came to him, she has not even to knock, for Jérôme, as Oliver had surmised, had seen her drive up in her cab and was waiting for her behind the door, which he opened gently and mysteriously as she was about to strike for admittance. She entered furtively and found herself suddenly drawn into a very deep, dark embrace, and before she could extricate herself from its delicious softness—which was so tenderly enthralling that she could not resist it—a warm, moist mouth was pressed to hers and a gentle hand laid across her eyes, that seemed instantly to blot out all the realities of life. Deeply and exquisitely she felt herself falling into an abyss of delight, and after a few tremulous moments of virginal fear, allowed her own lips to respond eagerly to that burn-

ing kiss which seemed to draw her heart out from her body. All the secret wonder of life had become suddenly divulged to her—made vividly clear at once. Jacqueline was never the same girl after that hour. She had touched the depths of human bliss and the mystic mystery of human love and sorrow were revealed to her. . . .

Slowly and reluctantly Jérôme separated his lips from hers, and then removing his hand from her eyes, allowed her to see the light again and to come back to the reality of existence. But she was bewildered and trembling still with fear of the new emotions that had arisen within her. Tears sprang to her eyes, but though she smiled faintly, as if to reassure him, she yet remained speechless with marvelling joy.

And Jérôme, seeing her standing thus before him, *désemparée* and ignorant as a child of the real significance of the emotions which were troubling her, looked into her wondering eyes and realized the crime he was committing. Alas! . . . This indeed was no practised flirt adding yet another victory to a long list of coquetries. No. Here was in truth a pure young girl whose lips had never been touched by other mortal lips, and whose body and soul alike were unimpaired. . . . Ah! the joy of being loved thus by so fresh, young and innocent a creature! Yet—to have decided—implacably, relentlessly—in one's own mind that one must not marry her, because of her lack of money! For one rapid instant Jérôme admitted to himself what a cad he was! But a furious instinct overthrew his moral reasoning once more

and a blinding desire to gain his end assailed him. He argued with himself. Was he not young too? Was he not in the full strength of his youth, and had he not a right to love and to live? Had he not the right to take this precious gift which almost offered itself to him . . . ?

For Jérôme read Jacqueline better than she could read herself, and knew that in the sudden mysterious awakening to the realization of emotion in her, she was at that moment entirely at his mercy. He had but to ask for her to give. . . . All the instinctive, almost childish coquetry with which at first she had almost unconsciously beguiled him, had gone now, had disappeared like the mist before the morning sun. She was his victim—his willing, happy victim. . . .

Jacqueline was still standing where she stood when he had folded her to his heart. She was panting a little, and half dazed, and was resting her hand upon a small table, as if for support against her too riotous emotions. Jérôme found no words to say to her, so he folded her once more unresisting into his arms. But this time he did not attempt to kiss her. He lifted her face to his, and looked into her eyes deeply—so deeply that Jacqueline's awed gaze fell before his—and as his kiss had drawn to him all the passion of her young body, so did his insistent, penetrating gaze draw to him all the passion of her young soul. Then slowly, gently, tenderly, as if to ask forgiveness for his too passionate caresses, he pressed her closed eyelids with his lips again. In the delicious darkness,

Jacqueline felt that she was passing into another more ecstatic state.

"*Pardon—pardon!*" he murmured softly. Then, as if to allow her to recover herself, he gently pushed her into an armchair and knelt at her feet.

"Say you have forgiven me, *mon cher amour*. . . . Say so, please."

"Forgiven you?" murmurs Jacqueline wonderingly. "Forgiven you! Why?" And her hand wandered lovingly, eternally, over the rings of dark hair that lay on his forehead. "Forgiven you, Jérôme! Why?"

"Ah, Jacqueline—you divine child!" he murmured shame-facedly, as he bent his head again, and kissed her gloved hands. . . .

Then making a great effort to dissipate the too voluptuous atmosphere that encircled them both he rose, and drawing Jacqueline up to her feet said more lightly:

"*Allons?* Get up and take off your things and let us have tea. See, I've prepared everything" And he pointed to a small table at the other end of the room upon which he had prepared all sorts of dainty cakes and biscuits and the crystallised fruits and sweetmeats of all kinds, which were contained in the parcels that Oliver had seen him carry to his studio.

"See, there is tea and wine, and all sorts of good things to eat. Let me give you a tiny glass of this *Vin de Muscat*. It will do you good. Will you?" And as Jacqueline made no reply and had sunk back

again into her chair after having removed her hat, cloak and gloves and placed them on the small smoking-table close to the divan, Jérôme poured out a glassful of the delicate fluid and falling upon one knee again he offered it to her:

"Do drink this, *chérie*." And in a still more tender tone he added—"to please me." . . . His voice sounded as music to Jacqueline, who was still dazed and trembling.

She allowed him to put the glass to her lips, and drank the golden, rosy liquid.

Instead of going to her head, the wine seemed to have suddenly steadied her nerves. She laughed a little.

"Ah! That has done me good. . . . Now show me your pictures." And as she spoke she rose from her chair and smoothed and patted her hair, straightening out the laces of her blouse also. She swayed a little giddily as she spoke.

"Isn't it rather warm here? I feel better though without my cloak. . . ."

"Is the light too strong? Perhaps you have a slight head-ache?" suggested Jérôme.

"Yes, I think perhaps, I have. . . ."

And Jérôme crossing the room dropped a crimson silken curtain over the lower panes of the window, leaving his studio in a warm half-shadow. It was a very dull wintry day, and the light was already failing. But the bright wood fire threw out its own red glow and so illumined the room.

Jérôme, to woo Jacqueline, took a mandolin from the wall and began to play softly—

*"Hier comme aujourd'hui,
Ce soir, comme demain,
Je t'adore . . ."*

The notes fell gently on the silence, and the room was filled with the music of his rather sweet baritone voice. . . .

Oliver in the next room was in agony, though the sound of the music reassured him somewhat. Oh! to feel that the woman he loved was in that room alone with the man next door, who had lured so many women there during his long, idle afternoons. . . . For how many had he not enticed to their destruction with those dulcet notes? Oliver knew that Jérôme's voice and guitar were two of his most convincing weapons. Jérôme had often boasted to him that few women who came as far as his studio could resist them. Of course those other women knew well what they were doing when they accepted the invitations of Jérôme d'Ablis. They were practised coquettes, amused at the idea of a small intrigue with a popular, handsome fellow, the leader of all the smart *cotillons* of the season. But Jacqueline! His innocent, sweet love, who believes herself to be so worldly-wise because she has learnt about life in books—but who in reality is so ignorant, so innocent!

*" . . . Nos âmes pour toujours sont unies.
Nous avons épelé le livre des amours infinies.
Et je ne vois plus rien, que l'éclair de tes yeux,
pleins de fièvres!
Viens! Je veux soupirer les derniers aveux, sur tes
lèvres . . ."*

Jérôme's soft, sweet voice was trembling with emotion. Oliver could hear its vibrations and Jacqueline was listening too, and perhaps allowing herself to be convinced by the specious words. . . .

Then suddenly the music ceased and Oliver could hear nothing more. . . . Yet in a terror of suspense he strained his ear to catch any sound, waiting attentively . . . breathlessly. . . . He had momentarily forgotten that he was almost eavesdropping. He could only think of Jacqueline's danger. So eager was he to catch even the slightest sound from the next room, that with difficulty he restrained himself from bounding over again to the partition to press his ear to it! He crouched down before his easel, his head in his hands, rooted to the spot with firm will. . . .

"I ought to go away, I know I ought to leave the building . . . and not stay here listening. . . . But I can't leave her in there alone with that scoundrel. . . . I *must* deliver her," he told himself a thousand times, torn between his fear for her and his sense of honour.

A sweat of agony broke out on his forehead. What *could* he do to save her? In her terrible danger he felt himself so powerless to help. Could he really do nothing! It was not only jealousy he felt, but agonised fear for her safety. He must find some means of freeing her from the trap that had been set for her guilelessness. Suddenly a low laugh could be heard ringing distinctly, sonorously through the thin partition. It was the low, yet light laugh of

happy lovers and was followed by a long—alas!—too eloquent silence! This seemed to drive Oliver mad. He felt that no force could prevent him from rising and striking the wall with his impotent fists and cursing the cruel seducer. . . . But to stifle his own cry of distress he had pressed his clenched teeth to his own knuckles. . . . Yet he must save her . . . now . . . at once! Yet by what means?

Then suddenly an idea came to him! It took hold of his mind instantaneously and held it fast. Almost in the same breath and without a single moment's reflection or doubt, he determined to put it into execution. He lost not an instant, but catching up his coat, his hat, and his walking-stick in a thrice and opening the door of his studio softly, he drew it as softly to, and then noiselessly glided down the long corridor and the single flight of stairs. Luck came to his aid for as he reached the door he saw an empty cab passing in the street. He hailed it at once, and bidding the driver wait outside for him, leapt back up the stairs and down the corridor in haste, as if greatly hurried and heedless now of the noise he was making. Then he stopped abruptly before the door of Jérôme's studio, and lifted his stick to strike for admittance.

After Jérôme had sung his song to Jacqueline, she smilingly thanked him and then rising from the divan where she had been half reclining among the cushions, began to examine the pictures upon the walls of the studio. As she stood before him, gazing upwards, her head raised, her slim throat outstretched, the nape of her neck under its shining mass of upraised hair

rose above the laces of her net blouse. It was covered with tiny tendrils of golden hair, and Jérôme looking at her back turned erect thus before him, lost his head, and in an instant rushed to her and before she could see him or even realize that he was near her, he had drawn her into his embrace, had entwined his arms around her supple waist and madly, passionately was kissing the back of her neck just where the tiny rings of hair were so alluringly golden. She, suddenly frightened at being drawn off her feet un-awares, tried to struggle; but in vain. She had lost her balance so unexpectedly that he had been able to draw her back on to the divan among the numerous soft cushions before she could even protest in self-defence. He did not speak, but seemed suddenly bereft of his senses and began kissing her ruthlessly, passionately, biting her hair and frantically crushing her breast with his fierce lithe hands. She was terribly frightened and suddenly proudly revolted. She was no longer in his power as she had been in the brief delicious emotion of his first kiss. With all her might she strove to get free. He had managed to twist around her slight body and had lost all control over himself as he mercilessly crushed her to him, his fierce strength overpowering her. He made a desperate effort to catch up her lips with his and meanwhile as she had so far successfully evaded him he murmured mad, passionate words to her. . . .

"Jacqueline . . . my love . . . my darling . . . *mon amour* . . . Give yourself to me. I love you and you love me too. Though we

cannot marry, we can love. We have a right to happiness. We are both young and ardent. Why should we not be happy together? Oh! Jacqueline! You are so wise, so clever, so superior to other girls—surely you have none of their conventional prejudices? We can be all in all to each other, Jacqueline! No one need ever know our secret. *Chérie*. . . . Listen to me . . . to your lover . . .”

But Jacqueline, still terrified, was quivering now, not only with fear but with sudden recoil and disgust. The man's passionate fury was too horrible, too brutal! She struggled wildly. Her love, her emotion, her tenderness—all were instantaneously transformed into a sickening repulsion, a desperate hate! In her clear mind, even at this moment, she saw vividly what was Jérôme's plan. And she despised him at once.

“Let me go . . . let me go . . .” she cried furiously. “I do not love you. I hate you. . . . I loathe you. . . . You coward!”

In her impotent yet gallant defence of herself she appeared even more desirable to him than before. He had lost all sense of shame and was determined to gain his end.

“Jacqueline . . . *Je t'adore* . . .” he implored. . . . “I will do anything you wish, if you will only consent . . . only yield to me . . . *ma chérie*.” . . .

But Jacqueline was now infuriated. She gathered together all her forces of mind and of muscle and managed to rise from the divan. Even in her blind

ignorance of men, she realized that Jérôme would indeed have sacrificed her to one instant of self-gratification; with all her strength she battled against him. Her hair was unbound, dishevelled; her bodice torn; one of the sleeves of her net corsage was rent in two; and yet she fought desperately, regardless of all save her determination. In a moment of aberration, as if to force her against herself to do his will, Jérôme, winding his arm tightly around her slim waist, made an effort to throw her off her feet once more. But she, equally maddened, seized hold blindly of the first weapon at hand, which happened to be one of the long hat-pins stuck into her hat that lay on the small smoking-table near the divan, and scarcely conscious of her own act drove it with blind and ruthless fury—and with all the fierceness of a young tigress—into the flesh of Jérôme's arm that encircled her.

Strangely enough, he, in his paroxysm, felt no pain; he did not release his hold upon her, but drew her closer still. Then in despair, as she could not free herself, she cried out aloud in her anguish, instinctively to that supreme human help that never yet had failed her:

"Maman! . . . Maman!"

And immediately, as if in response to her cry of anguish, there was a loud knock at the door. At the sound Jérôme suddenly liberated Jacqueline and, swaying from side to side like a drunken man, remained by her side silent, panting, but nevertheless making a desperate effort to regain some calm. The knock was

again repeated and he listened to it in breathless terror.

Jacqueline, too, was motionless—speechless with fear. She was half-fainting with emotion, disgust, horror. Jérôme motioned to her to hide herself in the small dressing-room at the back of the studio before he answered the summons, but she with similar mimic refused to do this and the breathless silence between them was unbroken. Again another knock sounded upon the door, this time louder and more determined.

“Jérôme!” called out Oliver’s voice in a clear though subdued whisper, as if the speaker did not wish to call the attention of the other tenants of the building. “Jérôme, are you there?”

A sigh of relief burst from Jacqueline.

“What do you want?” cried out Jérôme impatiently, angrily. He too was relieved to hear that the intruder was only Oliver Brent. Miraculously, his own voice was level.

“I am looking everywhere for Mademoiselle Réville. Do you happen to know where she is. Her mother is very ill and is asking for her.”

A stifled scream from Jacqueline came in immediate answer. It was an almost unearthly sound. As Oliver heard it, he silently rejoiced, but nevertheless he continued:

“I have been looking for her everywhere. She is not at the Sorbonne. Do come out and help me with the search. . . . Madame Réville may be dying. . . .”

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Another half-strangled shriek from Jacqueline struck Oliver's ear, but he kept his own voice well under control, and simulated the necessary expression:

"Be quick, Jérôme. Open the door. . . ."

There was another pause, during which Jérôme made frantic signs to Jacqueline to go and hide before he opened. But she had forgotten everything in the world except that her mother was ill and wanted her. In that one supreme moment she had measured her filial love and found it strong. Blindly she rushed towards the door. Jérôme tried to intercept her movements, but she avoided his touch, and pushed him aside with almost surpassing strength. Then she flung the door wide open and stood breathless on the threshold before Oliver, regardless of her dishevelled hair, of her torn clothes, of everything, and cried out to him:

"What has happened? Tell me quickly. Take me to her at once."

"I don't know exactly. . . . A fit, I think. Come along. . . . She is asking for you. . . . Every second is of importance."

And while Jérôme stood by, gazing at them both almost stupidly as if not understanding what was taking place, Oliver rapidly helped Jacqueline on with her cloak and hat, and collected her gloves, her umbrella and muff while she tied the thick veil once more over her head. Together they passed out of the studio leaving Jérôme standing breathless, mute, and half dazed.

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Not a word had been spoken between the two men since Jacqueline had opened the door.

Oliver put Jacqueline into the cab that was waiting downstairs and stepped in after her, calling out the address to the driver. As he closed the door quickly, a sigh of relief escaped him and the cab rolled off at a rapid pace. Jacqueline leant back against the cushions of the *fiacre*. She was almost unrecognisable. Her features were distorted, and she was as white as death itself.

"Can't you tell me what has happened to *maman*?"

"I don't know. Wait till you get to her." Oliver answered rather curtly, if not roughly. Now that he held her safe he allowed his anger to get the better of him. But as Jacqueline's sobs broke forth, he somewhat relented.

"Calm yourself, pray. She would be more upset still to see you in that state." He looked at her and for the first time she saw that he had noticed the disorder of her toilette, of which she herself had been momentarily unconscious. She pushed up the hanging strands of her hair beneath her hat as best she could, for she had no hairpins left in her coiffure; and untying the thicker veil fastened on the thinner one which was rolled up in her muff over her hat. This she securely pinned on to her head. She attempted to fasten up her blouse which had been partly torn open and smoothed down the tattered laces to hide them beneath the revers of her coat. She had wiped her face with her handkerchief and there would

have been no traces left of her recent tears, were it not for her swollen eyelids and tear-blistered cheeks.

Oliver tried to soothe her, but made not the slightest allusion to the fact of having found her in Jérôme's studio.

And more slowly now the cab rolled down the Allée de l'Observatoire, the Boulevard St. Michel, and over the bridge of the same name to the busy streets of the right bank, before Oliver spoke again. Jacqueline had recovered some of her natural calm and was breathing more regularly. Her thoughts dwelt exclusively upon her anxiety for her mother. Momentarily she had forgotten her terrible experience in the studio.

But now Oliver turned towards her, and taking her two trembling hands in his, addressed her in a voice in which emotion was successfully controlled.

"Jacqueline, you quite believe I am your true friend, do you not?"

"Certainly, I do," replied Jacqueline, somewhat bewildered by this unexpected question.

"Then you must forgive me, for I have taken a great liberty with you. But I had no other means of accomplishing what I considered it was my duty to accomplish." Oliver paused for a moment, and flushing slightly, resumed. "I told you a lie, just now. . . . Your mother is *not* ill, she never has been ill at all. . . . She is quite well and is probably awaiting your return now and making tea in your salon at home, ready for you after your lecture at the Sorbonne."

Oliver paused an instant, but as Jacqueline was too stunned to make any remark or even to understand completely what he was saying, he proceeded:

"For you are supposed to have been all the afternoon at the Sorbonne. Don't forget that. It is likely that your mother is now beginning to be anxious, for the lecture was over two hours ago, and she always keeps count of your time. But you have apparently not thought of that. Compose yourself, my dear," he said with a little more warmth, seeing Jacqueline's look of utter incomprehension. "Compose yourself, and let your mother think that you have been detained all this afternoon at the Sorbonne, for some reason or another."

During the whole of Oliver's speech Jacqueline had remained dumfounded with astonishment. It seemed to her that she doubted the very evidence of her own ears. For yet a few moments she was speechless. When she did at last realize what Oliver had done, and why he had done it, her very first instinct was anger—blind, furious, instinctive anger. And she was the more infuriated because she felt herself in the wrong and knew that she deserved his implied condemnation. But she struggled valiantly against her personal mortification before she would allow a word to pass her lips. Yet, even then it burst forth against her will in violent revolt, at the mere thought that some one had dared to direct her actions—to interfere with her supreme independence—even though she were in the wrong.

"You have *dared* to do, this, Oliver?" she ex-

claimed at last. . . . "You have *dared* to tell me this lie! . . . And *such* a lie!"

"Yes," he said, looking her straight in the face and proudly acknowledging his falsehood. "Yes."

There was a moment's silence during which Jacqueline and Oliver looked at one another like two enemies. But it was Jacqueline's eyes that fell the first with shame and humiliation.

"Yes, Jacqueline; I have dared this intervention in your affairs, and I have told you a deliberate lie. I would do so again, were it necessary."

"You acted from pure disinterested motives, I suppose?" Her very tone was a taunt.

"I acted as I did because I considered it my duty to save you. . . ."

"Indeed! Your duty! . . . And to save me. . . . How very generous! . . . No. You deliberately interfered in matters that did not concern you in the least, because you were jealous! That is why! . . . Deny it if you can! . . ."

Oliver bit his lip and forced himself into silence. A dull crimson stain spread over his features.

For a few moments Jacqueline was inarticulate with revolt, anger and outraged pride.

"Please understand, that I shall never . . . never forgive you, for your impertinent interference."

"I am sorry if that is so—but—now that I have saved you, I shall not claim your forgiveness. I am neither repentant nor ashamed. . . . And as I

have already told you, I would do the same thing again, were it necessary. . . ."

"I—too—should do the same again, if I chose to!" burst forth Jacqueline angrily, furiously. . . .

"How dare you judge my actions and interfere in my affairs? I go where I please—when I please—and as I please. . . . I should act again in just the same way to-morrow . . . if I wished!"

"No, you would not, Jacqueline," retorted Oliver bluntly. "You would not because you do not wish to break your mother's heart. Did you not call out for her just now, in your dire distress? She has only you in the world. She has given her whole life to you, and has founded all her hopes on you alone. . . . You surely would not wish to kill her!"

Jacqueline made no answer. Before Oliver's calm authority, his serene sense of responsibility, she was cowed. Yet so strong was her spirit of revolted independence, that a few moments later she burst forth again in a passion of still more concentrated fury than before, seeking to wound Oliver as deeply as she could:

"I thought that an Englishman would scorn to tell a lie!" She was still struggling with all her force against her stupendous anger, but her accents were haughtily contemptuous. Again Oliver's fair face was suffused with scarlet, but he still held his own, though Jacqueline's words hurt like a knife cleaving through healthy flesh.

"An Englishman lies when a lie can save another

human being! There are certain lies that are noble."

"A lie is always despicable!" retorted Jacqueline. "I despise a man who resorts to such means, whatever his object may be! Besides, you played the eavesdropper too! You must have listened at the keyhole . . . !"

This time Oliver winced and blushed.

"I did not listen voluntarily. . . . I could not help knowing you were there!"

" . . . You ought to have gone away . . . out of the house . . . if you could not help hearing. . . . To listen complacently was to act like a cad. . . . I despise you, and I refuse my friendship henceforth to an eavesdropper and a liar!"

She spoke bitterly, scornfully, and sat up straight in the cab, drawing her clothes away from Oliver's contact with a shrinking gesture.

Oliver was deathly pale now. He made no reply, but very deliberately he lowered the sash-window of the cab and motioned to the driver to stop. Raising his hat he stepped out of the vehicle on to the pavement near the Louvre, and said to Jacqueline:

"Then I will relieve you of my distasteful presence. You shall not see me again." As he closed the door, he repeated:

"Still do not think that I regret what I have done. . . . I would consider myself justified in having taken any means to save you—or indeed any other girl—from a bad man's clutches. Good-bye."

Jacqueline did not speak, neither did she acknowledge his bow. Her burning shame and anger almost seemed to stifle her.

Oliver, having paid the cabman, told him to drive on and the cab pursued its course across the Place du Theatre Français, down the Avenue de l'Opera and so on towards the Place Wagram.

CHAPTER XII

JACQUELINE got out of the cab with a quick, hurried movement, closing the door carefully after her, and turned at once into the wide doorway of the house. She felt that she could not even bear the scrutiny of the driver at that moment. He had seen her enter the cab with Oliver, who had almost bundled her into its refuge at the door of the studio, when she was so unshapely a mass of hastily thrown-on cloak, hat and veil, that he would hardly have recognised her now, comparatively trim and tidy. For, by the help of the small mirror fixed into the front wall of the cab, she had managed to restore some sort of order into her toilette. Her hat at least was now pinned on straight and her coat was no longer awry, nor her hair hanging in long wispy strands. But as a matter of fact, Oliver having paid the fare when he had left the cab, the driver took not the slightest interest in his female passenger, and whipping up his horse disappeared round the corner of the street almost before Jacqueline had entered the doorway. Her intention was to slip in quietly with her latch-key, to her own room and to change her blouse and dress her hair afresh before appearing before her mother in the salon. Unfortunately she had forgotten the hour, and had not reckoned upon her mother's anxiety.

Françoise had spent the afternoon indoors writing

letters and making a new blouse for her daughter. But about the middle of the afternoon, urged to somnolence by the warmth of the room, she had fallen asleep in the wide leather armchair which was her special corner at the side of the hearth. Strangely enough, at about five o'clock—probably at the very moment when Jacqueline had been in her great distress—for maternity has these divine promptings—Françoise had been suddenly awakened out of her slumbers by a curious sound like a cry. She fancied she recognised Jacqueline's voice crying: "*Maman! Maman!*" When she had awakened completely out of her sleep and was once more in the full possession of her senses, she had persuaded herself that it was but a dream. Yet the unpleasant sensation of that strenuous call still remained with her, and she could not shake it off. She rose from her chair and in order to chase all morbid thoughts from her mind, set to preparing the tea for Jacqueline's return. As the minutes became hours and Jacqueline did not appear, Françoise became really anxious. Had her dream anything to do with the truth? She repelled the idea as absurd and again sat down, and took up her work once more. But in vain. She could not proceed with it. Neither quietude nor repose would come to her. She felt nervous, agitated and worried. If only Jacqueline would come back! What could possibly be the reason of her tardiness?

Since Jacqueline had taken the habit of walking to and from the Sorbonne, Françoise had experienced many such torments of terror. But never before had

she had to grapple with so implacable an instinct of danger befalling Jacqueline. In imagination she saw her run over by a passing motor or by a runaway horse, or having twisted her ankle as she crossed the road. All the terrors that beset those who wait anxiously for the return of their beloved ones, beset her now. Her nerves, strung up to a high pitch aided her imagination to evoke in her fevered brain all the worst horrors that may befall a young girl, out alone in the dusk, in the streets of Paris. She remembered when Jacqueline had begun to go out alone, that still more terrible fears had assailed her then. Though she had practically conquered them by enforced habit, she could not rid her mind of their horrors at this moment. She remembered too, the day that Jacqueline had told her she wanted to have her own latch-key like her friend Nelly. Françoise had yielded to Jacqueline's pleadings, for she could refuse her darling nothing, but it had been entirely against her will.

"You don't trust me, then?" Jacqueline had asked, when her mother had at first refused.

"Oh yes, my darling, I trust you implicitly; but why take a key out with you, when you know that Clémence or myself are always at home when you return, and at whatever hour you come?"

"I want to have it even if as only a symbol of my true independence of movement," Jacqueline had replied. "No harm can come of it. I want to feel myself free—free as Nelly is—to come in and to go out of the house." Of course Françoise had implicit faith in Jacqueline as she had said. Moreover,

the fact of her being late to-day had nothing in the least to do with her possession of the latch-key. How silly of her to be so nervous as this! Françoise argued—or rather tried in vain to argue with herself! But if only Jacqueline would come back! What could have kept her? Françoise in her agony of suspense went to seek Clémence in the kitchen and questioned her. “Did Mademoiselle Jacqueline tell you that she would be back later than usual to-night?” she asked the faithful servant.

“No, *madame*. Or I should have told *madame* myself, long before now. *Madame* may well imagine that I understand her anxiety.”

“Then what can be keeping her?” She addressed the words rather to herself than to Clémence; but Clémence answered them nevertheless.

“I cannot say, *madame*; unless *mademoiselle* has gone on to tea with Miss Nelly.”

“Perhaps . . . she has . . .” replied Françoise, trying to lure herself into believing that it might be so.

Françoise left Clémence to her cooking, and opening the hall-door went out on to the landing. She leaned over the banisters as if she hoped to see Jacqueline coming upstairs. But the staircase was empty. Then she went back to the sitting-room, and in her agony of suspense began pacing the floor, backwards and forwards like a tiger in its cage.

At last there was a sound of wheels upon the road, right at the entrance of the small street that opened on to the *Boulevard Malesherbes*. With her hearing

strained to the utmost, Françoise heard it approaching. How slowly it seemed to come! At last it seemed to be drawing nearer. . . . The driver was evidently holding in his horse. Was it going to stop at the house? Yes! it had stopped now. But even before there was time for the door of the cab to be flung open, Françoise was out on the landing again leaning over the banisters. She waited breathlessly for a few moments that seemed to be hours. Then, after a little pause, the door at the bottom of the stairs opened Some one then came in with a rush—closed the door gently, carefully, as if to make no noise. . . . Some one—yes, it was a woman for she heard a swish of skirts—came slowly, very slowly, up the stairs. By leaning far over the top of the banisters, Françoise could just see the top of the last flight of stairs. She waited again for some minutes that seemed to her aeons of time. Then, at last, she caught sight of Jacqueline's blue hat!

But as soon as her eye rested on her daughter's form, instinctively, instantaneously Françoise reined in all her personal emotions. . . . Jacqueline's face was half-buried in her muff as she slowly and cautiously mounted the next flight, and Françoise from above noted the very evident restraint she was putting upon herself not to allow her steps to resound through the high vault of the staircase. More slowly still she ascended, her steps seemingly weighed down by her thoughts. All her mind was concentrated upon the one point of gaining her room before she could be

discovered. Françoise saw her take her latch-key from her pocket as she drew nearer. This was unusual, for although Jacqueline rejoiced in this symbol of her independence, she never used it. Françoise understood by this that Jacqueline intended coming in unnoticed. She had therefore something to conceal from her mother—she, whose actions were always so spontaneously transparent.

At this discovery, Françoise's first movement was to withdraw into the shadow of the hall, to close the door noiselessly, and so allow Jacqueline to do as she pleased. But the light of the stair-lamp struck full upon Jacqueline's face as she turned upon the second landing, revealing to Françoise a mask of such pathetic pain upon her darling's face, that instinctively she took a step forward to meet her half-way. And immediately she abandoned all wish to question Jacqueline. A sudden conviction came to her that fresh demands were yet about to be made upon her fund of maternal tenderness, and that if she were about to suffer new wounds, she must again bear their pain in silence and resignation. For it was evident from her expression of almost tragic grief that Jacqueline was in great need of maternal tenderness, love and pity. Françoise at once determined that Jacqueline should never guess her own anxiety on her account. So, as she began to mount the third flight of stairs, the daughter heard her mother's voice call to her, with quite a natural intonation:

"Ah, Jacqueline! At last! Come in and have your

tea at once, darling. I've not had mine yet; I've been waiting for you."

As she uttered no word of reproof or even of astonishment at seeing Jacqueline return at half-past five instead of four o'clock, the tone of her mother's voice reassured Jacqueline at once. She hurried her steps and ran up the stairs more quickly. And though she did not raise her face because of the strong light on the stairs that might reveal the agony upon her features, she called out to Françoise as naturally as she could:

"Yes, I'm badly in want of it. I've walked back the whole way."

The lie came spontaneously to her lips. Françoise trembled with renewed fear. But she thrust back all disquieting thoughts and went forward to welcome her child at the top of the stairs. And Jacqueline, who still kept her face hidden, was obliged nevertheless to renounce all thought of a quiet moment of restoration in her own room.

Françoise flung her arm round Jacqueline's shoulder, and making no remark either upon her appearance or upon her shame-faced mien, led her into the bright sitting-room. And here Jacqueline felt she had at last reached a haven of rest! The warmth, the subdued light, the merry sound of the ever-boiling kettle, the luxurious depth of the wide divan and their cosy cushions, and above all the presence of her mother—her dear mother well and in perfect health whom she had believed to be dying only a few moments ago—all these things struck her sensibility with such

intensity of emotion that had Françoise's own attitude not been one that suggested that her mind was entirely unruffled, she would have thrown herself into her mother's arms at once. But Françoise, anxious to put Jacqueline at her ease, affected the most blind inobservance. Nothing in Jacqueline's attitude or appearance was natural—neither the hour at which she had returned, nor the lie she had told her so spontaneously and so unnecessarily. But Françoise had resolved to pretend that she noticed nothing that was unusual, for above all she was determined not to alarm Jacqueline nor increase her present emotions by useless questions. Jacqueline herself seemed suddenly struck dumb. Standing before her mother now, in the full view of her scrutiny—she would have found it impossible to lie to her as she had done on the stairs with averted face. But she offered no explanation of her conduct, no excuse either, and Françoise asked her none. She sank into a chair by the table and begged her mother to pour her out a cup of tea. She drank it thirstily, and then began pulling off her gloves. The heat of the room struck her as intense, but she dared not take off her cloak because of the dilapidation of her blouse beneath it.

"I think I will go into my room and take off my things now," she said after a few moments of strange silence between the two women.

"Let me help you off with your cloak," said Françoise, as she moved towards her, and held out her hands to pull the garment from her daughter's shoulders. And before Jacqueline could stop or offer any

resistance, Françoise had drawn her cloak from her and revealed the torn and crushed blouse, with one of its sleeves rent in two and its lace ruffles hanging in tattered rags. She observed all these details in perfect silence, steadfastly refraining from all comment. Now that her darling was safe within the shelter of her home, nothing else mattered, and she was still firmly determined not to annoy her or increase her evident emotion by her own insistence. The really important thing was that she was restored to her. She drew out the long, jewelled pins from Jacqueline's hat, and as she removed it, the girl's hair fell down about her shoulders, released from its protection, the long strands from which the hair-pins had disappeared, unrolled to their full length.

And still Françoise made no comment.

Holding Jacqueline's discarded things, she followed her across the salon, and beyond the hall to the door of her daughter's room. She noticed the listless, weary movements of Jacqueline's body—and still she was mute. But once within the shelter of her own room and with closed doors, Jacqueline, as if her secret were indeed too heavy to bear alone—suddenly allowed her nerves to relax their tension. With a cry of utter desolation, of such poignant and remorseful anguish that it re-echoed in her mother's heart and brain like the appeal she had heard in her dream—Jacqueline, unable to restrain her grief any longer, threw herself upon her mother's heart, weeping the bitterest tears of her life.

"*Maman!* . . . *Maman, chérie!*"

And Françoise, without a word of reproach or inquiry folded her to her heart—leaned over her, gathered her deeper and deeper into the bosom that had borne her, and crooned over her as when she was an innocent babe. For a very long time they remained thus, their tears mingling, locked in one another's arms, mother and daughter in perfect love—in perfect grief. Then Françoise murmured gently, soothingly, to the child she adored:

“*Ma fille chérie, adorée*, give me your sorrow, and I will bear it for you. Put your burden upon my shoulders. I will take it from you. It shall become mine alone. I have sworn that your happiness shall be more to me than anything in the world. It has been the cult of my whole existence. It will be so to the end.”

“Alas, mother! . . . You wanted me to be free, independent and experienced! I have gained my knowledge to-day. And if that be the crown of my freedom and independence, perhaps it has not been a good thing for me to have it at all! . . . For I have not used it well!”

Then, seated on her bed, her mother's arms round her, her mother's lips upon her brow, Jacqueline told her all. Her attraction towards Jérôme in the country, her promise to go to his studio; her visit there; its result, and her delivery from the den of danger by Oliver. And lastly, her blind anger at his interference.

“You see, mother, I was wrong all round. But although I have behaved like a fool and am ashamed of my own lack of sense and judgment, yet I can't for-

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give—indeed I feel that I shall *never* forgive—Oliver for his impertinent and humiliating rescue. . . . I am a worthless creature, *maman chérie*! My pride is broken! My cleverness? Pshaw! In what has it helped me? I have behaved like the stupidest lovesick village girl. I merit no one's pity or love."

"Ah, my sweetest," replied Françoise, "you deserve all pity, all love. And you have them here in my heart. After all, nothing really matters now, so long as I hold you here, close to the breast that bore you."

Jacqueline turned to her mother with sudden fierce tenderness, and muttered half to herself:

"And to think, darling *maman*, to think, for several agonised moments I believed you to be dying—far away from me at that hour! Oh!" and Jacqueline's sobs rose almost to a shriek at the recollection of her past agony, "that was the worst of all the bitterness of this most distressful day! But at least it has had one happy result. For I discovered then—my heart's beloved—*what* you were to me! Nothing was so truly tragic as my anguish on your account. Neither Jérôme's base love nor Oliver's knowledge of my secret seemed to count at all! For I was frenzied with terror! Nothing in the world could be so awful as to lose the divine comfort of you! No," she repeated, as Françoise kissed away her tears once more, "no, never, never shall I forgive Oliver the cruelty—the wicked, inhuman cruelty of that lie!"

"Poor Oliver! He was so anxious to save you,

darling. He was probably beside himself with terror at the thought of your danger. I can quite understand that. After all, he was bound to find some reason for invading Jérôme's studio and carrying you off at once! You must forgive him, dear, because of his love for you."

"Oh love!" said Jacqueline with disdain. "Do not speak to me ever again of *love*! I've finished and done with it for ever. Oh, *maman*!" she cried again as she buried her scarlet face in the warm safeness of her mother's bosom once more. "If you only knew how horrible, how abominable that struggle was! It will remain as a hideous nightmare in my memory all my life. How odious, how repugnant Jérôme appeared to me then! If *that* is love, mother, then never speak to me of such a feeling again!"

Françoise soothed and kissed her, and softly caressed her hair with her hand. But she said nothing. She knew that no words could comfort her darling; only patient tenderness and love could bring solace. Notwithstanding her distress at Jacqueline's story, it seemed to her now that her daughter had become her baby once more—her helpless, petulant baby. And Françoise's quiet restrained comforting soothed Jacqueline's nerves more than any expressed sympathy. For a long space of time and in silence again, they remained locked in one another's arms. Then gradually Jacqueline's sobs subsided, Françoise kissed her upturned, tear-stained face again and again, and by gentle degrees a quiet peace was restored to Jacqueline's heart.

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She sat up and looked at her mother, her arms still around her.

"Tell me, *maman chérie*, tell me. How is it that you are so calm, so forbearing, so tranquil? How is it that this terrible experience of mine, which seems to me so great, appears to affect you as a comparatively small thing? Why have you no revolt—no hate—no words of revilement? Why?"

"Because, dearest, long before to-day, I myself went through my own trial of love suddenly transformed into hate, and, in one single moment realized the downfall of my most cherished hopes and dreams. Those who have passed through such an ordeal have gained a knowledge, that gives a great calmness to the soul, after its purification by many tears. To each one of us our own experience seems the most dreadful thing of all. To each of us, the remembrance of it remains as a horrible dream that makes us tremble with fear and anguish. . . . But once having passed through that process, the soul is purged forever"

"Mother! You never told me this before! Never hinted even at a personal experience of sorrow. I thought your youth had been guarded most carefully by your parents, who had defended you against all possible errors! Your conventional education must forcibly have prevented such experiences as this. If you had no freedom allowed you, at least you could put it to no wrong use."

"My dear, my experience did not come to me in my maiden days. . . . But afterwards"

Then fearing to have said too much, Françoise stopped short.

"Tell me, mother mine. . . . Tell me." Jacqueline leaned forward again and took Françoise's hand in hers. "Tell me, dearest. I want to know. . . ."

"Jacqueline . . . I once swore to myself that you should never know. If I tell you my secret I shall destroy still further faiths in you, which I have no right to destroy. I may make you still more unhappy than you are now."

"Nothing can hurt me more than to know you have a sorrow I cannot share, *maman chérie*. It will lessen my own burden if I may be allowed to bear yours."

And then Françoise, anxious to wean Jacqueline's thoughts away from her own trouble, told her for the first time all the story of the discovery she had made after her husband's death, and of the way in which she had been defrauded of all memories of love and happiness.

"You see, my sweet one—almost every woman must go through the ordeal of sorrow, at some time or another. But the baptism of tears is like the baptism of fire; it purifies. . . . When you have recovered from this shock, when you have realized the forces in you that are still strongly vital, when you have opened your own eyes again to the realities of life—then you will find that however painful this experience may have been to you, it will have given you knowledge. And knowledge will make you

strong—stronger still than you have been. My own experience was useless to me, because when it came to me, my soul was already morally fettered. I could do nothing more with my life. The knowledge I had gained frustrated all hope in my heart. I could not build up any new ideals.”

“But why not, mother? You had every right to do so!”

“Ah, my child! I could not! Because I had been trained to yield to circumstances, just as you were trained to dominate them . . . ! After the discovery I made, I found that my soul had been weakened by long repression that it no longer possessed in itself the vitality of reaction. All that was left of strength in me I gave to you, my sweet. And your education has been the direct result of mine. It was my own rebellion against the false ethics which had been taught me. I may have exaggerated the degree of liberty I gave you, because I acted in such fierce revolt when I decided what your training should be . . . But though I have never dared to hope that I could keep sorrow from you, at least I made every effort to shield you from the humiliating pain that I had known. I determined that even if you were to suffer at least it should be actively, not passively—it should be through your own fault, not through that of others. Do you understand?”

Jacqueline stood up straight and kissed her mother again.

“Yes, sweetest, I understand. I understand everything. And it makes my own sorrow seem a very

small thing beside yours. Oh, my darling mother, if I had only known! If I had only realized before now what your martyrdom has been . . . !”

“You could not have understood before to-day, Jacqueline. If I had told you of my story before, it would only have wearied you, or have seemed incomprehensible to your young mind.”

Jacqueline silently stroked Françoise's cheek. She looked upon her for the first time in her life with new eyes. The whole soul of the mother was revealed to the daughter in a new light. Jacqueline now knew that with the thoughtlessness of the young, who believe themselves to be so wise, she had misjudged her mother entirely, and she was confused with a sense of remorseful shame because she had not understood her better and loved her more. For the first time in her life, she saw into her mother's soul and the revelation of Françoise's moral fortitude not only brought comfort to her, and stood as a noble example to her, but also made her understand all that she owed to her. It seemed to her now that the whole of her life would not be long enough to atone to her mother for her own thoughtless and selfish youth.

“Dearest *maman*! How you have comforted me! How small and unimportant you have made my own disappointment seem in comparison with yours! Oh, darling, how happy I am that it is not too late to prove to you how much and how well I can love you! My sorrow has become yours, *maman chérie*, but your sorrow has become mine too. If you have lessened my burden, I, too, can lessen yours.”

"Ah, my darling, I cannot substitute my experience for yours; but at least if mine has helped you to bear with your own, then it has not been in vain, and I shall cherish it as a good thing."

"But oh! most mute and most wonderful of mothers—from what source of self-immolation, from what deep renouncement has your high wisdom been wrought? From what tears have you wrung your patience, your serene pity? Never have you let me even guess the store there was of unwearing indulgence and comprehension in your gentle heart."

"Only to-day, dearest, was it necessary for you to know. Only to-day was there any need for my own grief to come forth from its hiding-place in my heart to assuage and to comfort yours."

"And now that you have revealed yourself to me, mother, I realize my own blindness and ignorance! I believed myself so superior because I had learnt life in books! While you, *maman chérie*, were so enduring and so wise when you were confronted with my childish ignorance, my stupid petulance, my absurd and pretentious vanity! . . . What a vainglorious child I must have seemed to you! How irrational, and how absurd!"

"Jacqueline, you are my child, and I am your mother—and in that statement lies the whole explanation of myself. If I am able to comfort you to-day, remember you have brought me great consolation too, as well as much joy. . . . You may yet bring me deeper grief, for in your hands alone lies all possibility of happiness or of despair for me; but what-

ever burden you give me to bear, I shall bear willingly. I can never judge you unkindly, my darling! You do not yet know what a mother's heart is if you do not understand that mine is for you, absolute and everlasting understanding."

Jacqueline kissed her mother tenderly, reverently once more. And then she added:

"But darling, let me be entirely frank with you now. Though I admire you more than I can say, I cannot imitate your noble example. I do not possess either your resignation or your patient spirit of sacrifice. I shall not say to myself that my whole life is lost because of this one mistake. I shall gather myself together—greatly by your help, my dearest—and I shall go forth again into the fray, all the stronger because of my deeper knowledge. It will have taught me much, but it will not have crushed out my hope."

"Ah dearest! How glad I am to hear you speak so," burst forth Françoise impetuously. "This is my true reward, for it is exactly what I have wished for, my dear daughter. I want your hope to survive, whatever your momentary despair may be. If I have helped you to accomplish that, then I have been able to do more for you than I have ever been able to do for myself. And I shall not have lived in vain."

As Françoise spoke, Jacqueline looked at her critically, as her eyes had never yet dwelled on her. She saw her mother for the first time in her life as a woman—as a woman who could please, attract, charm, and be beloved of men. For her gentleness, her sweetness and her attractiveness had all remained youth-

ful, so youthful that Jacqueline saw in her mother to-day a freshness of the spirit which even she herself no longer possessed. It was the unrepressed vitality of a woman who has accepted fate resignedly, that burst forth now with a new brilliance. In spite of her usual serenity, the telling of her own story to her daughter, the remembrance of her old, yet unforgotten wrongs and the passion which their memory aroused once more in her, and awakened in her a renewed youth. It was evident that the joy of feeling herself at last in perfect harmony of understanding with her adored child had given her a new spiritual strength, and with it a fresher charm and fervour. Perhaps also the emotions of Jacqueline had stirred her own femininity, for momentarily she was transfigured. The placid expression of her beautiful countenance had disappeared, giving place to an elasticity of feature and movement that denoted the resurrection of warmer feelings within her. At the moment she appeared to Jacqueline not only as a mother, but as a woman.

"Dearest and sweetest one," said Jacqueline. "How beautiful you are! How bewitching! Only now do I realize what you are! Only now do I understand the adorable woman-heart you have sacrificed on the altar of maternity."

And Jacqueline rose, and taking her mother into her arms, pressed her to her breast, at last understanding all there was of nobility in her complete love and devotion.

"At last, dear mother. At last, now, I understand . . ."

And she kissed Françoise not only fervently and reverently, but maternally too. For in this strange conversation, her own womanhood had been revealed to her. It had suddenly blossomed and put forth its fruit, which is maternal love—that instinct which is almost divine in the heart of woman.

CHAPTER XIII

THE day following this enlightening conversation between mother and daughter, Jacqueline started at the usual hour for the Sorbonne, leaving Françoise alone again in the salon where she always worked, spending nearly all the day with her needle. To-day, while Clémence was out marketing, Françoise had drawn Jacqueline's torn blouse from the hiding-place into which she had thrust it out of the reach of the servant's keen eyes the evening before, and quickly mended it before Clémence could return. Then she carried it back to Jacqueline's room and folding it carefully, laid it back in its drawer, feeling as she did so that she was laying to rest forever, the last token of Jacqueline's terrible experience.

Jacqueline felt almost as another being after the revelations of the day before. But it was not the scene in the studio that remained fixed indelibly in her memory; it was the story of her mother's life. This had shown her so new an aspect of her mother, that for the moment she was almost bewildered. It seemed to her as if she had only just begun to know her. Certainly she had never understood her before. The rather sweet and gentle creature who hitherto had been entirely wrapped up in her daughter's existence, who seemed to have no life apart from hers, now appeared to her in quite a new light. Inclined

to over-value her own intellect and its acquirements, Jacqueline had been equally disposed to underrate her mother's character. She knew that Françoise belonged to the generation of women whose moral training had been more stringent than that of their daughters', but whose mental education had been neither as complete nor as solid. Françoise had but a very small smattering of the knowledge that is acquired in books, and which was in truth the only knowledge that Jacqueline possessed at all. So far, Jacqueline had been inclined to think somewhat arrogantly that her own culture was all-sufficient for the battle of life. Now she perceived that it had imparted but little true knowledge of life, and had not even taught her how to read the character—even superficially—of the one human being who was so near and so dear to her. Indeed now, Françoise appeared to her daughter almost in the light of a heroine of romance. The personal decision, the wide and understanding sympathy, the grand generosity she had shown in her relations with the woman whom a less noble creature would have treated with contumely—appealed greatly to Jacqueline's admiration, indicating, as it did, a spiritual strength of personality which commanded the daughter's complete respect. And what claimed this modern girl's approval so strongly was not only the power of renunciation that Françoise had shown in putting aside all thoughts of personal happiness after her spiritual awakening, but the tenacity and endurance of that resolution throughout the long years which had elapsed since. What

mental fortitude, what self-restraint she had proved that she possessed! The daughter paid high tribute to these superior moral qualities that forced her to acknowledge her mother's greater and nobler character notwithstanding her imperfect culture.

Jacqueline admitted to herself as she walked along down the Boulevard St. Germain towards the Rue des Ecoles, that among the numerous friends that had made up their intimate circle, during the years of their residence in Paris, Françoise Réville might surely have met—and probably more than once—some man who might have attracted her and tempted her to break her vow to herself. The forces in her nature were capable of renewal like those of all human beings, and there was no reason because she had voluntarily killed her love for Adrien and even all memory of it, that subsequently she should not have built up in her heart a new temple of belief. For Jacqueline, with her more modern conception of femininity and its claims, would not admit that because a woman had been mistaken or befooled once, she should not wipe out all unpleasant memories from her mind, and wander forth once more into the regions of passion, in search of that personal happiness to which every human individual had a right. It seemed astonishing to her that her mother should have so definitely renounced the natural and legitimate joys of the wife and of the *amoureuse*.

Meanwhile, during these reflections of Jacqueline on her way to the *cours de littérature*, Françoise herself still ensconced in her favourite chair, was talk-

ing to Pomm, who had just called to see her. He knew that he was always sure of finding her at home at this hour, and had come straight on—after his lunch at a restaurant on the *Boulevard Montparnesse*—to pay her one of his conventional visits. For Pomm, who had never known the relaxing atmosphere of a home, who had always lived among strangers, and whose social soul had been fashioned only by the etiquette of naval officers—though he knew Françoise Réville so well, was always most ceremonious in his relations with her. At the instigation of Françoise, he had now acquired the habit of leaving his hat, coat, and stick in the hall, though had he followed his own impulsion he would have come into the salon with his hat and stick in one hand, and with his other hand falling straight at his side while he made the conventional bow which it is correct for all Frenchmen to make to ladies. But long ago Françoise had smilingly asked Pomm to leave his company manners with his hat in the anti-chamber—so that now he came forward into the room divested not only of his coat, hat and stick, but also of his stiff, conventional attitude. But he was not empty-handed. For having successfully filled to overflowing most of the living space of his own abode with useless books, he was now endeavouring to accomplish the same task in the home of his two only friends. He had many excuses for bringing literature to Jacqueline, for in the preparation of her *Licence*, there were numerous volumes, besides those designated in the programme of special studies,

which might be helpful to her. Since he had been informed of her intention of competing for her degree, he had made a point of hunting up for her all the mustiest works he could discover within the boxes of the quay book-sellers. He never arrived at Françoise's flat without several new volumes to distribute. There were half a dozen books at least always concealed about his person destined for presentation either to mother or daughter—or to both. He not only carried parcels of these in his arms, but also in all his pockets. His overcoat was entirely shapeless owing to the weights he inserted into them; even the side pockets of his jacket sagged most painfully.

To-day, as he entered, he carried three old volumes, the works of Joachim du Bellay for Jacqueline, and two volumes of a novel by Madame de Lafayette for Françoise. In the pockets, of course, there were various pamphlets, and among these the printed speech of an early Republican Minister of Public Education of 1848, which touched upon the question of woman's education which he always considered to be the special hobby of Madame Réville. He deposited the books carefully on the table before he greeted his friend. Then without accepting, or even heeding the chair which Françoise offered him, he stood before her on the hearthrug and burst forth into explanations concerning these excellent volumes, which he was delighted to have discovered on the quays for a few *sous*, pointing out to Françoise the immense interest which the works of du Bellay could

offer to Jacqueline, and extolling the charm of Madame de Lafayette's prose, which he deemed above all praise. Françoise listened patiently with her quiet resigned smile. She knew Pomm's idiosyncrasies and always humoured them. She knew that for him, life had no personal attractions, and that he was really only vividly interested in the life to be found in printed matter. This alone was real to him. Life itself was not. And the only two human beings whom Pomm could possibly allow to claim his attention, were Françoise and her daughter. Each time he arrived at Françoise's flat, he invariably plunged immediately into the particular subject which interested him the most at the moment, keen to explain all he had read since his last visit and regardless—at least for the moment—of the personal interests of his two friends. To-day he expatiated even more lengthily than usual upon the great merits of the volumes he had brought with him, so that even the patient Françoise felt as if she must soon lose her temper.

But when at last forced to pause for want of breath—he sat down opposite to her, then it was that she began to talk. Halting at times with strong emotion, she told him the whole story of the incident at the studio the previous day, though she made no allusion to the conversation she had had with Jacqueline subsequently, deeming it too private and too sacred even for Pomm's ears. When the meaning of Jérôme's infamy was clear to him, Pomm was not only astonished, but deeply indignant. He rarely

lost his temper, but when he did so, it was a serious business. As Françoise's story progressed, his anger against Jérôme d'Ablis increased to furious rage. But though he was incapable of expressing what he felt, by the time Françoise had finished, he was deeply affected, not only by his sympathy for Jacqueline and Françoise, but with a personal feeling of violent resentment against Jérôme. His profoundest feelings were hidden in his heart, but all his warm paternal love for Adrien's child awoke in him and clamoured for vengeance. However he said nothing to Françoise because he could not explain what emotions he felt. He was the more silent, being the more touched. Indeed to Françoise he seemed almost indifferent. After a few moments, as he made no remark, Françoise asked him:

"Well, what do you think of Monsieur Jérôme d'Ablis?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Pomm.

"Don't you think that he deserves a severe punishment, to have so betrayed our hospitality at *Les Peupliers*?"

"Yes" reluctantly, ". . . I suppose so. But young men will be young men!"

Françoise shrugged her shoulders. She was incensed at Pomm's apparent lack of sympathy.

"What a stupid remark to make!" she exclaimed.

"If you will insist upon giving free education to a French girl you must not be astonished when these things happen," he pursued, not heeding her interruption. "Young men in France are not prepared

for young girls to have such liberty as Jacqueline is accustomed to enjoy."

It was Pomm's habit, in viewing a situation, never to give his own opinion, but to use the very arguments of depreciation which would infallibly be advanced by the severest and most unsympathetic judges.

But to-day, the gentle Françoise was truly hurt, by his apparently apathetic tone. To her mind it indicated a culpable lack of interest.

"How odious you are, Pomm! Why, you almost seem to suggest that Jérôme's conduct is entirely justified! In my opinion he ought to have the soundest thrashing that can be given him! If I were Jacqueline's father or brother, instead of her mother, I'd go and give it to him myself! . . ."

Pomm made no answer. He was reflecting deeply upon a sudden thought that had taken root in his mind. But his features remained in complete repose and no one could have guessed what he pondered.

After a few moments' total silence, he consulted his watch. Then he rose suddenly with a jerk as if a spring had opened inside him. He had taken an abrupt resolution, though nothing in the expression of his face revealed the fact. Françoise, whose own feelings had been somewhat soothed by her outburst, being used to Pomm's peculiar ways, went on with her stitching unconcernedly.

"Good-bye, *madame*," said Pomm, suddenly standing up before her once more and holding out his hand awkwardly.

"What, are you going already?" asked Françoise.

"I expect Jacqueline home in a few minutes. Won't you wait to see her?"

"No, I can't wait to-day," he murmured indistinctly. "I have something to do that is most important, and I have an appointment on the quay at four o'clock. . . . So kindly beg her to excuse me. . . . Don't trouble to move," he added as Françoise was rising to go to the door with him. "I know my way. Good-bye."

And Françoise, smiling at the old man's eccentric manner, to which she had never become entirely accustomed, let him go.

"*A bientôt!*" cried Pomm.

In the anti-chamber, Pomm took up his hat, looked at it to be sure he was putting it on front side foremost, then put it on and taking down his coat with much awkwardness scrambled into it. Then he took his folded muffler from a peg, and deliberately wound it three times round his neck. Lastly he picked up his walking stick of thick, sound, solid wood and provided with a crook handle. He contemplated this implement, inspecting it critically for a few moments, turning it round and round in his hand and weighing it carefully. Ultimately it seemed to commend itself to him and to meet with his entire approval. Then he consulted his watch once more.

"I shall just have time," he murmured to himself as he opened the hall-door and let himself out gently. . . . "Yes, I shall just have time. But dear me! I must take a cab, for the man said that he would have that third volume at four o'clock sharp

and there's always such a rush for those books. . . . Dear me! dear me! I do hope I shall not miss that appointment!"

He hailed a passing cab and with clear precision gave an address to the driver. It was the address of the buildings where Oliver Brent and Jérôme d'Ablis had their studios.

Jérôme d'Ablis was in his studio. He was feeling rather abject. Not that he felt remorse for his behaviour of the day before—but as he had entered the house a few moments before he had come face to face with Oliver Brent in the corridor. When Jérôme saw Oliver he put out his hand to greet him as usual, believing it to be more tactful to ignore their last meeting altogether. But Oliver looked him straight in the face, and putting his two hands deliberately behind his back, refused Jérôme's proffered handshake.

"Henceforth, we are no longer friends," said Oliver, opening the door of his own apartment. "I have no further explanation to give you. You will understand, I forbid you to speak to me or to recognize me in any way, wherever, and whenever we may meet. You understand?"

"But . . ." began Jérôme in explanation.

Oliver interrupted him. "Nothing more need be said. I regret that I have not the right to call you out on *le terrain* and put a bullet through that rotten skull of yours, though a sound hiding would be more what you deserve—a clean bullet would be contaminated by your contact. Unfortunately for me, and

luckily for you, I might do more harm than good if I interfered. You understand?"

Jérôme made no answer. He flushed crimson and, unlocking his own door, passed out of Oliver's sight. Jérôme had ever been somewhat afraid of Oliver Brent and, besides, he was not prepared to take even a salutary chastisement for *les beaux yeux* of Mademoiselle Réville. Oliver on the other hand, knew enough of French customs to realize that he could not punish Jérôme without compromising Jacqueline irrevocably. So for her sake he swallowed his unmitigated disgust.

As he entered, Jérôme looked around his studio. The genius that presided at the concierge's lodge had tidied it up and swept it out that very morning. There was no trace of Jacqueline's presence there on the previous day. The divan, which contained the always ready-made bed beneath its covering of Algerian embroidery, looked neat and inviting. Jérôme threw himself upon it nonchalantly in a sudden fit of ill-temper against everybody and everything, but against Oliver and Jacqueline in particular, and began to think over the situation. Yes, it would be most inconvenient to be in such proximity to Brent now. He must give up his studio and seek another in the *Quartier*, if they still tarried about his appointment at the Foreign Office. What a nuisance it was! And what a nuisance women were too! It was always through them that a man met with all his worries! For Jérôme's resentment against Jacqueline was so great now, that he found some comfort again in the con-

viction that she was a mere vulgar flirt, playing one man against another. It was very evident to him now that she had told Oliver of her intended visit yesterday! Perhaps even, she had begged him to interfere. Yes, of course, his intervention had been concerted between them! Pshaw! Well, this was the last time he would be caught flirting with an up-to-date modern girl, who had been educated at a *Lycée* and attended the Sorbonne lectures. No more of these for him, thank you! after yesterday's experience. He would confine his interests to the ladies of the demi-monde or the unfaithful wives of his friends, after this. It would be a lesson to him! With them at least you always knew where you were. They were bound not to kick up a row because they had their own husbands to reckon with. . . . It was so difficult to know how to deal with this new generation of so-called *jeunes filles*. . . . Impertinent, vain creatures who knew as much Latin and mathematics as any man of their own age, who competed with men at the University and elsewhere and yet who provoked men's attentions to the top of their bent, with their feminine wiles and coqueties! *Cette petite* Jacqueline Réville! Who would have thought that she could have been such a prude! After the way she had behaved in the country? She had never even pretended to be innocent, like the *jeune fille bien élevée* of a former generation who could never leave her mother's wing. She went out alone. She must know life. She must know how men behave with attractive women when they are alone with them!

She had evidently fooled others before just as she had fooled him! How she and Oliver must be laughing in their sleeves at him now! How completely he had been tricked by them both! Pah! He was sick with disgust and horror of the whole thing. Yes, he would get another studio as soon as possible and move in his things at once, even if he had to sacrifice a quarter's rent. It was worth it, not to be meeting that sanctimonious, hypocritical *Angliche* next door at every turn! . . .

And Jérôme, thoroughly dissatisfied with himself and with things in general, gave a vigorous kick or two at the numerous soft cushions of his divan and sent them flying half-way across the room.

In the midst of these reflections he heard a knock at the door. He got up and went to open.

On the threshold stood an old gentleman with a closely cropped, pointed silver beard, and a very long nose. He wore a soft crushed felt hat and an overcoat that sagged very much at the pockets. In the buttonhole of his coat was the rosette of the Legion of Honour.

"Monsieur Jérôme d'Ablis?" he inquired politely.

"Yes, *monsieur*, I am Jérôme d'Ablis. At your service."

"I have something to say to you, *monsieur*."

"Certainly, *monsieur*. But," and he looked at the old gentleman's face, "I do not remember whether I have the honour of your acquaintance. . . . ?" He hesitated courteously.

"Excuse me, if you please; let me give you my card." And Pomm, for Pomm it was who thus called

upon Jérôme d'Ablis, began in his awkward fashion to fumble in all his inner pockets for his card-case.

The open window of Jérôme's studio was just opposite to the door. A sudden sharp current of air blew across the two men's shoulders.

"Please come in, *monsieur*. We are standing in a draught." Jérôme was always terribly afraid of catching a cold. He closed the door behind the old sailor quickly.

"That's exactly what I wanted, young man, if you only knew it," chuckled Pomm to himself as he still sought the depths of his multitudinous pockets for his card-case. At last he drew out a pasteboard and offered it to Jérôme.

"*Voici, monsieur.*"

And Jérôme read:

"MONSIEUR JEAN POMMERET,

"Capitaine de Frégate en Retraite."

Jérôme raised his eyes inquiringly to Pomm's impassive face.

"But, are you not mistaken, *monsieur*? I am afraid that I have not the honour of knowing your name. . . ."

"Then I must introduce myself," said Pomm in a more resolute tone than he had used till now, and assuming a firm look. "I was the most intimate friend of the late Monsieur Adrien Réville. I am the oldest friend of Madame Adrien Réville and her daughter. Perhaps you now understand, what brings me here to-day, *monsieur*?"

And so saying, while Jérôme still stood before him in surprise, he suddenly shuffled out of his old coat, his black muffler and felt hat. Advancing towards Jérôme, before even that astute young man was aware of his intention, he had thrust three nervous fingers of his left hand between the back of Jérôme's collar and the nape of his soft white neck. And before Jérôme could remonstrate and still less expostulate, he had twisted him deftly round and with his knotted stick was belabouring his supple back and thighs with repeatedly well-aimed and particularly cruel blows. The strokes fell with precision and regularity, and Jérôme was so surprised by the sudden attack that for the first two minutes he did not utter a sound. Then suddenly his cries rang out—his cries for mercy. Ludicrously childish they were, at first; pitiful and imploring they grew at last. But Pomm was inexorable. He intended to administer a thorough punishment, and that thorough punishment Jérôme d'Ablis should receive. Not one stroke should be spared the young man, and no flinching or relaxing of his firm grasp upon Jérôme's collar would Pomm allow himself. The old sailor had come here to perform a necessary though unpleasant duty, and he would perform it to the utmost.

The thick knotted stick whirled through the air as it rose and fell with unerring, well-timed precision.

"*Pardon . . . pardon . . . monsieur!*" cried Jérôme, who was literally weeping with pain of the stinging blows.

"*Attendez, . . . cher monsieur . . .*

wait! I have not finished yet," answered Pomm, in almost a genial tone. For though he was breathless with the strong exercise of chatisement, he was determined to be polite and moderate in his language. "A few more strokes and I shall have done with you," he added reassuringly, and indeed the final blows were administered with redoubled energy and accuracy.

At last Pomm's vengeance was satisfied. He lifted up Jérôme, now supine as a dead rabbit, off his feet entirely and ceasing the execution of the punishment, threw his victim in a listless heap on to the soft cushions of the divan. So bewildered with physical pain was Jérôme that he lay there prone, his face buried in the soft pillows, weeping and crying out in the intolerable smart of the weals upon his body.

"*Vous m'avez tué!* You've killed me!" he cried out in sobbing remonstrance, his words alternating with painful moans.

But Pomm paid no more attention to the sufferer than if he had been an extra cushion on the divan. He quietly and peacefully proceeded with all his dressing arrangements once more, and with his rather awkward though composed movements, picked up his hat, looking at it again to see if he were putting it on straight—folded his muffler round his throat, got clumsily into his coat, and picking up the useful knotted stick, opened the studio door, and then closing it again carefully after him, stepped lightly down the corridor with a satisfied feeling of having performed an important though distasteful duty. Meanwhile Jérôme remained sobbing—his face still buried in the cushions.

Next door Oliver Brent, who had seen Pomm go into the studio and had heard the well-administered chatisement in progress, smiled grimly to himself a smile of deep satisfaction.

"He has killed me! He has killed me!" moaned Jérôme distressfully, as he rubbed his smarting shapely legs.

"You won't be much loss to society, if he has—you abominable cad," muttered Oliver to himself as he listened to his neighbour's wail of agony.

And he went on imperturbably with his work, softly whistling the "Marseillaise" . . .

Pomm hurried onwards in the direction of the Quai Voltaire and arrived there puffing and much out of breath. He was only just in the nick of time to secure the precious treasure upon which his heart was set, for almost before he held the coveted book in his hand, he perceived a much hated rival collector appearing upon the scene. But with an elated sense of victory, Pomm trotted off home with his new acquisition tucked safely into his left-hand pocket, just beneath his heart, rejoicing in the gratifying conviction that this afternoon he had accomplished both a difficult and unpleasant duty, but, conscious that at least his virtue had met with a fitting and consoling reward.

CHAPTER XIV

JACQUELINE now devoted far more hours of the day to her mother and to her home. The whole tone of the conversation between mother and daughter since the day of their understanding was entirely altered. Françoise treated Jacqueline now not as a child, but as a full-grown woman—not as a daughter, but as a friend. And Jacqueline herself began to understand that there were many things in life for her yet to learn. She knew that hitherto she had lived and acted but as a child, and in a chastened and more humble spirit she set herself to acquire a new attitude towards life.

When, some months before at her coming of age, she had been informed by her mother that she had an independent fortune of her own, Jacqueline had not much questioned its source. Françoise had told her that it had been left to her by an old school-fellow of her own, who had been charmed with Jacqueline when a baby, and Jacqueline herself had accepted this explanation quite simply. Now that Jacqueline had begun to approach all things and events in a new spirit of investigation, she manifested her surprise at this inheritance, and wished to understand the better how it was that this money had been left to her independently of her mother.

“Tell me, *maman chérie*,” she said one day a few

weeks after their friendship had become to both of them so real a thing—she was sitting at her mother's feet, while Françoise pursued her everlasting embroidery by the fireside—"how is it that I am the possessor of two hundred thousand francs which have nothing to do with your own fortune? And even if the money is mine, why have you not had the use of it first, since the Madame Ducastel who left it to me was your old friend?"

Françoise looked at her daughter for an instant. She had always resolved to tell Jacqueline of the origin of this money when it seemed necessary to do so. She perceived that the moment for a full explanation to Jacqueline had now come.

"That money was left to you by Madame Ducastel, the widow of the once famous Sébastien Ducastel, the Deputy. She was *not* an old friend of mine, my dearest. She was a widow with no children. She left you all she possessed." Françoise suddenly halted in her explanations. She found it more difficult to speak of Cécile to her daughter than she had anticipated. . . .

"That I have already gathered, *maman*. But who was Madame Ducastel? I have never heard you speak of her except in connection with my money, and only then once. Tell me who she was," Jacqueline persisted.

"Dearest," Françoise began again, and then leaned over towards her daughter to take her hand. "Dearest, I want you to try and understand my motives with all that is best and most generous in your heart."

Françoise realized that though Jacqueline was acquiring a wider knowledge of life by leaps and bounds, that nevertheless it would require a very broad comprehension for her to understand why her own mother had accepted Cécile Ducastel's gift to her child.

"Dearest, listen and try to be quite unprejudiced. The other day, when I told you about your father and the woman who had loved him before I had ever met him, I did not tell you her name. It was Cécile Ducastel. . . ."

For a few moments Jacqueline was silent. Her face was very pale. She was too dumfounded to speak

" . . . Mother!" there was a world of astonishment in her voice. "Mother, I understand still less now!" she exclaimed, flushing now to the roots of her hair. "I should never presume, knowing what I do now of your character, to question your wisdom or your judgment. But how is it that you allowed my father's . . . friend . . ." she said the word with a choking voice; "how is it that you allowed that . . . lady to dower me—your child? I cannot understand, try as I may!"

"My dearest, she was dying and she implored my consent . . . she even begged my forgiveness. . . . But there could be no question of that between us. . . . Forgiveness implies judgment, and I had not the right to judge Cécile. . . . We both had been victims. We both had erred—she through love and I through ignorance. . . . And besides! . . . Can any human being *ever* for-

give another? Only God can truly pardon. . . .
 But . . . I realized how truly great and noble
 her love had been. I pitied her, Jacqueline. I almost
 think that in those last sad hours, I loved her . . .
 poor, poor woman! And I could not refuse her last
 request. . . ."

Jacqueline silently watched her mother's face as
 she spoke and saw the tears she shed for the woman
 who had so deeply loved her own husband.

"What an angel of goodness and of mercy you
 are, mother, I feel that never shall I entirely sound
 the depths of your heart!"

Françoise made no reply save a sweet protesting
 smile. She wiped her eyes and quietly resumed her
 embroidery.

"But why did she leave *me* her money and not
 you? I still do not understand," persisted Jacqueline.

"She loved you, dear, yes loved you. I am sure
 of that . . . because you were the child of the
 man whom she had so adored."

For a few moments Jacqueline was again silenced
 and lost in thought.

"I am trying to understand, dear mother, and to
 assimilate your own divine and sympathetic compre-
 hension. But it will take me some time yet to reach
 your perfection. Tell me more about this Madame
 Ducastel. After all! if *you* could forgive her, surely
 I ought to do so too!"

Françoise smiled again at her daughter.

"Do you remember, Jacqueline, one day when you
 were thirteen or fourteen years old and were still a

pupil at the Lycée, I once left you alone for three days in the care of our good Clémence? I told you then that I was obliged to remain with a dying friend."

"Yes . . . yes . . ." said Jacqueline, suddenly remembering and following her memory back along those nine or ten years. "Yes, I know now. . . . When she died, you and I alone together attended the funeral. I wore a black frock and you gave me a sheaf of beautiful white lilies to place on the coffin. You prayed with me at the side of the grave. . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . I remember."

"Well, dearest, it was Cécile Ducastel's hearse we followed."

"Tell me more about this woman, mother . . ."

"She left you her money, though at first I protested, as an atonement. Could I refuse her that poor comfort when she was dying? . . . Could I?"

Jacqueline pressed her mother's hand in reply and looked up at her adoringly from her seat at her feet. Burying her face in Françoise's lap she kissed her knees. But she made no other reply and Françoise continued speaking:

"She loved your father, my Jacqueline, indeed she did sincerely, completely. And strange though it might appear to many people, she loved you too, because you were his, though you were my child and not hers. As she lay dying, she told me that she had often followed you when you were a tiny child, and I or Clémence took you to play in the Parc Monceau. She never let us see her watch, but she used to gaze

at you for hours together while you made mud pies or played with your dolls. . . . You were the child of the man she had loved! Was that not pathetic, darling? I admit that it touched me greatly. . . ."

"But, mother mine. . . . I still don't like taking that money. . . ."

"Ah! don't say that, dearest. . . . She died so happy in the thought that it might atone . . . even a little. . . . Try to forgive her too. Believe me—though this is a cruel thing for me to have to confess to my daughter—she loved your father far better than ever I did! For she continued to love him even after she had known his unfaithfulness both to herself and to me! When a woman loves like that, Jacqueline, her love is either a very noble or a very base thing. Hers was noble. Many might judge her harshly, but her memory compels the respect—or at least indulgence—of those who understand. She was greatly to be pitied."

"Dear mother, I cannot say that I entirely agree with you yet, but that only proves how inferior I am to you. . . . You are supremely good and wise in all your judgments."

And Jacqueline once more threw herself into her mother's arms, and kissed her affectionately. She was determined henceforth to allow her own opinions to be largely influenced by Françoise's superior experience.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet as she looked at the clock.

"Goodness! I must be off to the *cours*. 'And you've not been out for days, *maman*! Do come with me to the door of the Sorbonne and walk back through the Luxembourg Gardens. It will do you such good. It's such a lovely day.'" And Françoise agreeing to accompany her daughter they started off together, arm in arm, like two companions of the same age. For Jacqueline instinctively, without reasoning out her conduct during the last few weeks had avoided her friend Nelly. Not that she felt in any way that she cared for her less, but since the episode of the studio and the part Oliver had played in her destiny, she instinctively felt that she neither wished to see him nor anyone belonging to him again. So the innocent Nelly was ungenerously sacrificed. They met every day at the Sorbonne, as a matter of course, but Jacqueline always found a fresh excuse to elude the further companionship of her friend. Nelly reminded her too much of her brother, and Oliver reminded her too intensely of her most bitter experience. Moreover she could not yet reconcile herself to the thought of forgiving him. Though his interference had been timely and useful, it *was* interference; and that the proud and haughty Jacqueline could not find it in her heart to forgive, even now. She wished to punish him for his audacity in taking that responsibility of defending her against herself, and she experienced a sort of cruel delight in making him feel her anger. She knew that the best way to punish him was to deny him the joy of seeing her.

During their close friendship, while the painting of

the portrait had been in process, the minds of Jacqueline and Oliver had very closely come into contact and their hearts had been drawn together by a community of feelings. But throughout this friendship Jacqueline had been conscious of Oliver's respectful admiration, and had appreciated it as one of her most cherished possessions. She had wished above all things to retain it and in her inmost heart could not forgive herself for having lost it by her own fault. It was the very basis upon which his feeling for her had been built. It was therefore most bitter, most humiliating for her to be reminded by seeing Oliver, that she had lost this respect, and to feel that the pedestal upon which he had placed her had been overthrown by her own actions and the tender and deferential consideration she once had inspired in him forever destroyed.

She was vexed with herself and her pride made her still more vexed with Oliver because she felt that he understood her humiliation. Although she had been momentarily turned from her intellectual interest in Oliver by her passionate love for Jérôme, she had always appreciated Oliver's opinions most highly after the long conversations during the hours of her sittings, when so many ideas in common had made them such close friends. Strange to say she had never troubled to think whether Jérôme was intellectually a companion for her or not. She only knew that she felt happy in his presence, with all her instincts aroused in full activity. Though Oliver had never made her pulses beat, he could probe her mind, and

fathom her moral and psychological being far better than anyone else, even excepting her dear mother. During all the weeks and months when her anger against Oliver was at white heat almost, every day, she was astonished to discover how much she missed him and his friendship. She now began to understand all that Oliver's companionship had meant to her being conscious of the void his absence made in her life. When she read a book, or saw a picture, or went to a play, that thrilled her with intellectual interest, she found herself continually regretting the fact that she had no friend or companion with whom she might exchange her impressions and opinions. For in such moments she found her *maman chérie* sadly deficient. And Françoise herself was well aware of the fact that she could not sympathize with her daughter on an intellectual plane. Her early education had never developed in her any taste for attainments of the mind. She had never been able and never would be able, to follow her daughter's intellectual pursuits. In the domain of the heart and of the feelings and in all that related to human sentiments, Françoise had gone far beyond the point of understanding which her daughter had only just reached. And in all things concerning the philosophy of life, Jacqueline now recognised her mother's superiority. Hers was the supremacy of character over learning. But it could not compare with mental culture nor replace it, and there came moments when Jacqueline bitterly regretted her feud with Oliver, for no one of her *entourage* had ever been so near to her-

self in all processes of mental conception as he had been. The days went by, and the months had already grown nearly into a year, and she began more and more to appreciate the precious thing she had lost in losing Oliver. And as her passion for Jérôme had shown itself to be but a perishable and impermanent thing that had had no real rest in her heart, since it had been scorched out of existence by her fiery resentment, then she began more slowly still to understand the greater relative importance of intellectual sympathy as compared to mere instinctive selection. Thus she began to recognize a great, incontrovertible truth. But her pride still reigned supreme, and her haughty spirit was conscious only of its own smart, forbidding her yet to own that truth even to herself.

After Françoise had left Jacqueline at the door of the Sorbonne she proceeded to return home, walking through the Luxembourg Gardens in compliance with Jacqueline's wishes. In all these smaller details of life Jacqueline still advised and Françoise obeyed. She had become used to that habit during the years of her daughter's petulant childhood, and her child's guidance of her life in the smaller issues had been but the continuation of her husband's guidance. For Françoise's moral training had taught her to obey the decision of another will stronger than her own because of its sway over her heart. About half-way through the Luxembourg Françoise, feeling somewhat tired, sank down to rest upon one of the stone benches that surround the lake in the centre of the grounds. Around here were

many good and earnest mothers of the *bourgeoise*, performing their self-imposed duties of nursemaid, as Françoise herself had done years before in the Parc Monceau. Her gaze swept around the beautiful gardens. Students in their velvet *bérets* were passing to and fro between the gates on the right and on the left, and mothers and nurses accompanying small children who played among the shaded alleys as Jacqueline had done of yore, were attending to their charges. Scholarly-looking men—probably professors at the Sorbonne, at the *Collège de France*, or at one of the larger Lycées near by, were hurrying to their own lectures. Short-sighted spectacled girls and of untidy appearance and fervent features with heavy portfolios of books carried in their frail arms, were speeding likewise towards some *cours* or another in preparation for some examination.

Within the last twenty years, since French women have been admitted to the various degrees of the Sorbonne, a new type of French maiden has sprung up, the *étudiante*, or female student, that constitutes a species of French girlhood apart from all others. The *étudiante* is not so masculine as the similar English type, nor so unsexed; but she is distinctly a creature apart, not to be measured by the same standards as other *jeunes filles*. She presents similar idiosyncrasies to those of her corresponding type in England, showing nevertheless a better choice in the selection of her clothes. Her hair is untidy, her footgear is slipshod, but she has yet retained her femininity in her eyes and in the expression of her mouth. She is

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still pre-eminently a woman, though she is so very different to the other women of her nation. She is not yet a third sex, but forms a separate class of her own among women. One can see that she is thus because she herself has not voluntarily chosen her fate, but has been forced by circumstances to accept it. Indeed, at first, she has struggled hard against it, for it is quite certain she would have preferred to have been a wife and mother. But her prudent and far-seeing parents, knowing they have no dowry to give her and consequently no husband to offer her, have directed her somewhat unwilling footsteps into the paths and highways of superior culture, in the hope that there she may find her salvation and her livelihood. So she has followed the road that leads to the clash between the sexes, and by degrees she has lost the more apparent qualifications of womanhood. But this has been wholly involuntary on her side, and all her crushed and repressed womanhood still lives rebellious yet in her sorrowful eyes, and would be ready to leap up and extinguish all the lesser fires of her over-cultured mentality at the very first call of love claiming her as his own.

As Françoise looked upon these frustrated types of womanhood pressing onwards towards the Sorbonne she compared them in her own mind with Jacqueline and she realized better still what her own daughter was and how more complete was the development of her child who possessed all the intellectuality of these passing *étudiantes* and still retained all the compelling feminine appeal of the more strongly-sexed woman.

In the midst of these musings she was astonished to hear her name called and looking up she saw Oliver Brent, tall and fair, with bared head standing before her. He had walked quickly through the gardens before he had caught sight of Françoise, and the exercise had brought a colour to his face. His eyes were suddenly aglow with his spontaneous delight at the meeting, and the pallid sun of the winter afternoon lit up his bright close-cropped head with a golden glow. Françoise looking upon him thought what a comely man he was, and sighed at the thought of Jacqueline's persistent and invincible anger.

"I am so pleased to see you, *chère madame*," said Oliver in response to Françoise's greeting. "I was afraid I should never see you again." He blushed shame-facedly as he spoke, and stopped suddenly short. He did not know whether Françoise was aware of the reasons that separated him from Jacqueline. But Françoise, anxious to hear what explanation he would give her, rushed blindly into the fray.

"You never come to see us now!" she said reproachfully. "You have not been near me for months!"

Oliver sat down by Françoise's side and put on his hat again. He was somewhat puzzled as to what answer he could make, for he ignored what explanations Jacqueline had given to her mother. But seeing his painful confusion, Françoise added with spontaneous sympathy. . . . "Alas! I know why you have not been near us, you dear boy. . . . Yet I thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you did—

I at least shall never be grateful enough, believe me." Oliver bent over Françoise's hands and kissed them. His heart was very full, and he could not speak. But he made an effort and gathered himself together like the strong man that he was.

"I love her so!" he muttered to himself.

"I know you do," said Françoise tenderly. "And I am happy that you do. There is no one whose love for her I appreciate so highly." Oliver was silent. Again he pressed Françoise's hand.

"Oliver, believe me, I am truly sorry that Jacqueline's pride—false pride it is too, and she knows it is, though she will not admit it—has led to your estrangement. . . ."

"Ah! Jacqueline is obdurate then? I was afraid she would be!" he said sadly.

"Alas! I think so; at least for the present," replied Françoise.

"It is becoming a very long 'present'!" said Oliver sadly.

Then after a moment's pause, Françoise began:

"You see, dear, Jacqueline is very, very proud. And her pride has been deeply—very deeply wounded. Her sense of humiliation is very great."

"But I don't regret what I did—I would do it again if it were necessary. I told her so," interrupted Oliver harshly. A deep flush stained his fair skin again and he drew his brows together angrily with fierce determination.

"I know . . . I know. . . . She told me

all about your quarrel too. I think that she told me everything, Oliver, everything."

"Everything?" queried Oliver, unconvinced.

"Yes, everything. Her attraction towards Jérôme, his asking her to the studio, his behaviour to her there, and finally your intervention—which saved her. Dear Oliver! I—her mother who adores her—shall never be able to thank you enough for what you did then, even though you wounded her pride horribly. . . . I admit that."

"You see," said Oliver, "it was so simple. It seemed my absolute duty. I would have done *anything* to get her out of that den. I did what I did, cruel though it was, because I love her."

"I know that and I am glad that it is so. Can I say more? There is no man to whom I would trust her so willingly——" said Françoise in a grave and gentle voice.

Oliver turned towards Françoise on the bench and again he looked straight at her. She met his direct gaze, and there were tears in her eyes.

"You mean that, Madame Réville?"

"I do mean it, Oliver."

The moisture of tears welled up in Oliver's eyes, but he was too thoroughly English-bred to allow his emotions to master him. He bent his head over Françoise's hands and kissed them reverently once more.

"Thank you," he said gently. "I do not know whether my hopes will ever be realized, but I shall be

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eternally grateful to you for your trust in me." Françoise leaned towards him.

"Oliver," she said slowly and wistfully, "I should dearly love to have you for my son . . . some day."

Oliver still held her hands tightly on his. He looked long at her once more, and smiling at her.

"*Maman chérie!*" he murmured gently and with great tenderness. Then after a few minutes' very tense silence that was heavy with many unshed tears, Oliver whispered: "It's the first time since my own dear mother died that I have pronounced that word."

Françoise pressed his hand again, but did not speak, and after a few more moments of silence she spoke:

"She is fond of you—at least she was—until the day that you tried to manage her affairs."

"—And then she broke away like a restive young horse."

"Yes," and Françoise smiled, "but I know my daughter. She will perhaps be angry with you for a very long time. But in the end she will get over her temper. For it is her pride and her vanity that are wounded—not her heart. . . . She is in reality more angry with herself than with you. . . . And she is angry with you because she is angry with herself. Do you see?"

"Yes, I understand. But what a sweet winsome creature she is! And what a sweet woman she would make for a wife."

"She must suffer still a little more till her wicked

pride has given in. To such natures as Jacqueline's, sorrow is the only true education. It will teach her to uplift her soul to a higher conception of love and of life."

"Are you not rather cruel to her, *chère maman*?" urged Oliver gently.

"No, I am not cruel. But I see her as she is and not through the eyes of a lover. . . . Poor child . . . ! I alone am to blame, for it is my fault that she is so wayward. I have always adored her since her babyhood. She has been my whole life. I was determined that she should have every chance, so I gave her the best of educations, of mental trainings. But she is still too inexperienced to understand the relative value of things. She is still too much inclined to believe in the sole supremacy of brains, though she has begun to discover now that outside things can resist her, and that she is powerless to force them to conform to her individual will. When she has suffered still more and matured in the discovering of life, she will be a delightfully complete creature. She is elaborating a new soul now. In the process of cultivating her brain she has allowed her heart to stagnate a little. But she *does* possess a heart. Believe me. And she is a woman too! And such a terribly feminine one, the dear child!" for Françoise's mind had reverted to the *étudiantes* she had just been observing. "She is full of sex, though she does not yet realize the divinity of it in herself. But Oliver, be gentle and above all patient. She will find out some day that it is you and you alone she must love.

I am sure of that. She is already beginning to discover that she misses you. You are the only man—in fact the only person—whose brain she respects and admires. That is your greatest claim upon her, and with a girl of Jacqueline's mental capacities that is a very strong claim. Though I am not an intellectual woman myself, I quite understand that. . . ."

"But if she never lets me see her?"

"A time will come when she will. Be hopeful and keep up your courage. She will feel the need of you terribly some day, when she discovers that she cannot do without her friend, her comrade. She will suffer from your absence and will find out that she misses you. But be patient; wait and hope."

Oliver pressed Françoise's hand.

"Dear *maman chérie!* You have done me so much good. You have given me hope. And hope is life. Thank you again."

Françoise rose from her seat. It was time to be going homewards.

"Good-bye, my dear son. You may tell dear Mrs. Brent and Nelly that you have seen me, and give them my love. The good, kind creatures! They must think it strange that we have so suddenly abandoned them! But we cannot explain—can we?"

"They think it strange, that is certain. But I have given them to understand that I've quarrelled with Jacqueline. They are both loyal and patient. They quite understand, and are just waiting . . . like myself. . . ."

"You are all dear people! You dear, dependable,

faithful English friends. I do appreciate you well. At least be sure of that. And now good-bye. . . . Of course I shall not tell Jacqueline that we have met. She would accuse me of heinous disloyalty to herself."

"Yes—I know——" murmured Oliver sadly.

And Françoise left him standing bareheaded in the late sunshine in the midst of the delights of the old gardens. The sun had fallen in a dull red glow behind the intricate lacework of the leafless trees. Mothers and nursemaids with their charges were preparing to depart, as the wintry twilight was preparing to enshroud all Paris.

Françoise reached home just in time to prepare Jacqueline's tea.

CHAPTER XV.

THE long winter was past. There was a new breath of spring in the air. Françoise's small salon looked gay and festive, for to-day was her at-home day. There was no fire in the grate, for this year's balmy mid-April precluded all thoughts of artificial warmth indoors. The air was indeed so summer-like to-day, that Françoise had left open one of the three windows that had a view over the garden at the back of the house. In the deep recess made by the wide-flung sashes, a small settee was ensconced which offered comfortable accommodation for those *causeurs* who preferred a *tête-à-tête* to general conversation. The room was provided with plenty of extra chairs in hope of many visitors, and vases filled with bright spring flowers—purple and creamy irises predominating—made masses of colour in every corner. It was a free day for Jacqueline at the Sorbonne. She was very keen upon competing for the *Licence* the following year, and in consequence was working assiduously and not missing a single *cours*, so that her presence at one of her mother's "at homes" was a rare thing. Clémence had decorated the small dining-room, aided and directed by Jacqueline herself, that morning and between them they had made the room, papered with a creamy paper, and furnished with old dark oaken furniture, bright with many golden daf-

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fodils and much light greenery that Jacqueline had collected in the garden. The table was decorated with lace d'oyleys around a wide embroidered centre-piece—the work of Françoise's clever fingers; the teacups were arranged in a circle, and various plates of cake and *petits fours* were tastefully set to offer the guests. It was so very seldom that Jacqueline was able to assist her mother at these informal monthly festivities when Madame Réville received and entertained her friends and acquaintances, that Françoise had insisted upon this being considered a special occasion, and had made extra preparations in consequence. Among her friends Françoise numbered several artists, clever amateur or professional performers on the piano or violin, or singers of renown and ability. Some good music had been promised to the guests who arrived in numbers at about five o'clock. After tea had been served in the dining-room, all the visitors trooped back into the cool and charming salon with its three gay views upon the lovely budding garden, to listen to the recitals of a clever actor from the Comédie Française, to the playing of a young pupil of the Conservatoire, and above all to applaud Eve Norris, the celebrated English *cantatrice* from the Opéra Comique, who was an old acquaintance of Françoise and Jacqueline, and whose name alone was sufficient to call together all the music-lovers of Paris. Jacqueline, who during most of the winter had been somewhat listless and inclined to sit by the fire in the evenings instead of accepting Pomm's invitation to the theatre or attending evening gatherings at the houses of

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various friends of her mother's, had to-day decided to put off her more sombre thoughts and join Françoise in the pleasure of receiving her guests. With her shrewd observation, Françoise had noticed that by degrees youth was getting the better of Jacqueline's disappointment and sorrow, and that soon her dear one would be emerging from her voluntary *retraite* and be as actively engaged upon enjoying herself as before.

She had gone with much eagerness with Françoise to the dressmaker's to help her to choose a new spring gown for herself, and in her draperies of pale blue voile de soie she looked a very charming picture. Perhaps because a more conscious womanhood was growing within her, Jacqueline's very beauty was altering, and softening wonderfully. The firm lines of her mouth had somewhat relaxed, and had become sweeter. Her eyes, black and heavily fringed beneath her rather prominent though finely pencilled brows were less sparkling perhaps, but had a more tender expression. She still wore her bright rebellious hair massed up high upon the top of her small head like a royal crown of gold. Though she was tall and very slim, the angles of her body, perceptible only when she moved, seemed also to have softened down too and to have become more flexible. There was a more feminine grace about her than before, and less of the springing joyousness of the hoyden. When she smiled, there was a chastened melancholy in her smile that had lost its rather supercilious superiority of former days. She helped her mother to do the honours of

the table with deliberate charm and distinction. She was polite and gracious to each and every one, and the former buoyancy of her rather assertive self-reliance seemed to have given way to a more conscious reserve, and to a certain gravity of tone and gesture that was most perceptible to those of her friends who knew her very well. But the change in Jacqueline had been so gradual and was so subtle that it was not evident to mere superficial observers, though it was like a new radiance shining from within her. Alone her mother understood its full and real significance.

All through the long days of the past winter when the thoughts of both Françoise and her daughter had been so intimately wedded, the name of the Brents had rarely been pronounced between them. If at times Jacqueline spoke of Nelly, it was as one speaks of a friend one has had in one's youth, and of whom one has retained kind memories without any wish of meeting again. In her present mood, Jacqueline's mind was entirely introspective and the only other creature in the world who interested her just now, besides herself, was her mother. Although all companionship upon an intellectual basis was impossible between them because of Jacqueline's more varied attainments, yet for the moment Jacqueline found the study of her own emotions and those which her mother spoke of so often to her now, all-important for the present. Even the books and studies which had occupied her mind solely hitherto, seemed momentarily savourless to her, for she had been roused suddenly to an interest in human nature itself

and the mere pleasures of the human intellect no longer appealed to her with the same keen force.

It was this upheaval in the preoccupation of her mind which had burst through the outward semblance of the young girl and which permeating her spirit had altered her appearance in so elusive yet complicated a manner. Since the day of her explanation with her mother, with a great effort of will she had tried to put all dreams, all thoughts of Jérôme from her mind. But though there were rare hours when he was as but a memory to her, that did not prevent her from often thinking of him still. Love's young dreams die hard; and Jérôme d'Ablis had made a great impression upon her youthful heart and brain because he had been the first man who had dared to pierce the outward armour of her rather *farouche* and maidenly reserve, and to make a direct appeal to her heart. She was still too young to realize this fully, for she was at least conscious of the remorseful pain she felt when she allowed her memory to dwell once more retrospectively upon her charm and fascination. Even now, the memory of their moonlight walk in the woods of Marly, and of the first kiss they had exchanged upon the threshold of his studio as he had drawn her into his embrace, had the power to thrill her passionately. Many nights when Françoise had believed her to be asleep, Jacqueline lay stretched upon her narrow bed, her face pressed downwards into the pillows so as to stifle the noise of her sobs, weeping her heart out in agony. Had Françoise known of these dark hours she would have suffered bitterly herself, for there was

no greater grief for her than the knowledge that she could not entirely share the sorrow of her best-beloved one. But Jacqueline possessed the temperament of the *amoureuse* which her mother, having not, could not understand. Françoise's brain could only compass the impulses that were prompted from the heart, not those urged by the senses. And as tenderness alone could raise her to great heights of comprehension, she was powerless to judge her daughter's urgings towards warmer feelings. As she neither felt, nor understood passion herself, she was apt to underrate its strength, and she never quite conceived what forces Jacqueline had to contend with. She did not comprehend that from her father, her child had inherited deep emotional powers which were promptings which had nothing in common with her own more placid and better-disciplined impulses. She did not entirely realize similar, that though their two souls might unite on a basis of affectionate understanding, yet the hearts of mother and child could never really be as one, because of the essential difference in their natures.

Though Jacqueline judged Jérôme most severely and was determined never to meet him again, for she now saw clearly through his vile calculations, yet the passion in her young heart yearned towards him still as it probably never might again yearn towards any man. For Jacqueline, though she did not understand it yet herself—and might perhaps not understand it for many years to come—was not a passive female creature like her mother. She was a creature of active temperament, and even if she had never had the free

upbringing which Françoise had decided to give her, she was essentially of the race of those who are capable of breaking down all barriers to gain the gratification of their own instincts. Fortunately for Jacqueline, her training had built around her soul the strong fortress of her will, so that she could curb and restrain her restive spirit by the severe discipline of her determination even though she could not destroy it completely. But the spiritual effort which this necessitated cost her far more vitality than her mother could ever have understood. So not only was Jacqueline forced to uphold this struggle alone, but she was obliged to conceal it from her mother's uncomprehending eyes.

As Françoise herself was essentially the type of the passive woman—that artificial product of centuries of hereditary repression, her own temperament had been crushed out by her education as Jacqueline's had been accrued and almost over-developed by hers. Notwithstanding all her acquired experience, all her sympathy and all her love, Françoise never understood the violent promptings of Jacqueline's blood. And Jacqueline, realizing this incomprehension of her mother's, concealed from her watchful loving eyes the hours of her bitterest anguish.

After the famous actor had given his recitations from the classics, the lady from the Conservatoire had played the violin and at last Eve Norris' magnificent enthralling voice had conquered the hearts and nerves of the assembled guests. Again and again the famous singer had generously complied with the

wishes of Françoise and had sung several songs for the delight of the assembly; yet the hours were slipping by and after the last song most of the guests, still under the charm of that wonderful music, had reluctantly risen to depart. Jacqueline, whose soul had been uplifted into the regions of dreams by the majestic beauty of sound, seemed to return to earth as she rose with her mother to receive the thanks and the parting greetings of their friends. For a few moments longer the great *prima donna* lingered in the almost deserted salon with Françoise and her daughter, delighted with the delight she herself had created. And then, with handshakes and affectionate greetings, she had left them to go and dress for the evening performance with a promise to sing for them again soon at another party. After her departure the salon suddenly seemed entirely emptied when mother and daughter returned to it once more. As the late spring afternoon had now become chilly, Jacqueline closing the open windows prepared to rearrange the chairs of the room in their natural order, once more, when suddenly there was a ring at the bell. As it was nearly seven o'clock, both Françoise and Jacqueline were somewhat surprised at the arrival of so belated a visitor.

"Perhaps it's Pomm!" exclaimed Jacqueline in answer to her mother's interrogatory look.

"I'm sure it isn't. You know he never comes near us on our at-home days. He hates meeting people. . . ."

"That's true," said Jacqueline smiling as she re-

membered Pomm's avoidance of new acquaintances. "Then who can it be?"

She was soon answered. Clémence entered the room and announced Mrs. Brent.

At the mere name, Jacqueline's face froze and became quite white. She rose from her chair with a spring, and before Françoise could stop her had turned and left the salon by the door which communicated with her mother's room. At the same moment Mrs. Brent entered breathless and diffident by the other door.

"Dear Madame Réville! I felt I *must* come. Do forgive me if I am not welcome. . . ." said the good woman as she held out her hand. The expression of her kindly countenance was most appealing. There were tears too in her bright blue eyes, and the loose lips of her expansive mouth were trembling.

"Dear Mrs. Brent!" said Françoise as she grasped the outstretched hand—gloved in a wrinkled black suède glove. "Of course you are welcome and of course I am delighted to see you!"

"That's just what I said to Nelly before I came," exclaimed Mrs. Brent, triumphantly, immediately reassured by Françoise's words. "'I can't stay away from Madame Réville any longer,' I said, 'and so whatever you do I am going to see her. I know she likes me, and even if you young people have had a tiff, there's no reason why we old fogies should not be friendly. . . .'"

Whenever Mrs. Brent alluded to her as an "old fogey," Françoise could not refrain from amusement.

She burst into irrepressible laughter now at once. "You are quite right, Mrs. Brent. There is no reason why you should not come to see me if you want to. I assure you that my *personal* feelings towards all of you have never undergone any change.

"Dear Madame Réville, I am so glad to hear you say that," said Mrs. Brent as she subsided into a low cushioned divan, from the depths of which her curly white head alone seemed to emerge, crowned with a small bonnet of red roses that bobbed up and down looking like a gaily painted buoy carrying a crimson flag, ever triumphant on the waves of a stormy sea.

"You see, my dear," continued the good lady as she patted Françoise's hand, and looked at her with affection, "I know there's been a misunderstanding between Oliver and Jacqueline, and though Nelly and I do not know what it has been about—nor do we wish to pry into Oliver's affairs to find out—yet we quite understand that Jacqueline does not like to come to our house for fear of meeting Oliver. Yet notwithstanding that I am quite determined that *I* shall come to see *you* sometimes since you are not opposed to my visits. . . ."

"Of course I am not, dear Mrs. Brent. Now tell me how are Nelly and Oliver?" she added, hesitatingly, as she offered her visitor some tea.

"Oh, they are both as well as possible, though Oliver is a bit stern and silent, and at times looks pale and rather miserable. . . ."

Françoise made no answer. She knew that it was true that Mrs. Brent was totally ignorant as to what

had caused the estrangement between Oliver and her daughter, and she neither wished to enlighten her, nor indeed to allude to the subject more than was possible. She did not mention the fact of her having met Oliver in the Luxembourg Gardens, knowing also that Oliver himself would not have spoken of it to his aunt and sister.

"Listen, dear Madame Réville," said the excellent woman. "I've come to make another proposition. . . . Not the same one as last year. But it's quite as nice an idea, I can tell you!"

"Well," said Françoise, for she was always amused at the good lady's exuberance, "I'm waiting to hear what it is. Your proposals have generally something soundly good in them!"

"Well, you know that Nelly's three years of study in Paris will be terminated in June. I had let my house in Kensington, furnished for three years; but now the lease is up, and the Americans who had it are going back to their native shores at the end of May. So I am going to give up the lease of my flat in the Boulevard Raspail at the same date and return home with Nelly. Oliver will of course remain here because of his work. He has decided to make Paris always his home, though he will often come for months together to England to stay with us. He has taken Jérôme d'Ablis' empty studio next door to his own—for I suppose you've heard that Jérôme has been appointed somewhere in South America and is on his way there now."

Mrs. Brent paused for breath, but as Françoise

made no comment, she resumed: "Oliver has opened a door between the two rooms so that one will serve him for a bedroom. He will lunch and dine at a restaurant. Of course—as I tell him—that is not a good way of living for a man of his age. But I hope that he'll marry some day and have a home of his own. He is coining money literally, and as he is not entirely impecunious on his father's side, we shall see him a rich and fashionable painter yet."

Françoise had not spoken during Mrs. Brent's long harangue.

"Well! I suppose you have come to say good-bye to us then?" Françoise now remarked sadly, "and we shall not see you again. . . ."

"Not at all," put in Mrs. Brent vivaciously, and the very roses of her bonnet shook with a spirit of negation, "not at all! I have not said all I have to say yet! What I am going to propose is that you should come and spend the summer with us in London. . . . There now!" as Françoise's features suddenly became blank . . . "It's out at last, and can't be helped! I want you to consider my proposal most seriously, even if it does surprise you a little at first. You can't possibly include Nelly and me in your quarrel with Oliver, can you? We've nothing to do with it, have we? And we shall be so lonely at first without any of our French friends and without Oliver, who can't possibly come over till the autumn. You two would do us more good than anyone! Surely you still love Nelly and me?"

"Certainly we do, we love you dearly," said Fran-

goise reassuringly. "Indeed it is most kind of you to invite us, and I greatly appreciate your generosity in understanding and accepting the situation so frankly. But——" and she stopped hesitatingly. "There is Jacqueline to be consulted, of course . . . and even if she is willing—which I greatly doubt—I am obliged to confess to you sincerely that a journey to England seems a great undertaking for me! You know I am one of those old-fashioned French women whom the very thought of travelling terrifies!"

"Oh, a trip to London from Paris is nothing! I am sure Jacqueline would enjoy it. She will induce you. . . ."

"I certainly will!" said a bright voice at the open door of Françoise's bedroom, and Jacqueline walked into the room. As she had sat alone in the next room she had made a sudden determination to vanquish the strange feeling of shame that she felt at the mere mention of the Brents' name, and had resolved to conquer all her fears instantly. Opening the door of her mother's room, she had heard Mrs. Brent's last words.

"Then you will come, I am sure," said Mrs. Brent as she kissed Jacqueline's pale cheek, "for you always manage your mother so well!"

"To the best of my ability at least," replied Jacqueline laughing. "I am most anxious to visit England and shall be delighted to see Nelly again. How is she, by-the-bye?"

"Very well, my dear; and she'll be crazy with delight at the thought of having you at Rose Lodge."

"That's very good of her. I appreciate her mag-

namity, dear Mrs. Brent, for I've been an ungrateful beast to Nelly. I see that now. But I can't see Oliver yet—I assure you," she said after a moment's reflection, for she thought it better to break into the subject at once. "Later on I may perhaps be able to feel friendly towards him again, but not yet. I can't. He has been too impertinent . . . I can't . . . I can't!"

She had almost forgotten the presence of Oliver's aunt and her own mother in her feeling of sudden, renewed resentment at Oliver.

"Oh, Jacqueline! . . ." began Mrs. Brent, most distressed at this unexpected outburst. But Françoise had laid her hand gently on the kind lady's arm and stopped all further speech.

"Don't let us ever discuss Jacqueline's and Oliver's affairs, dear friend. They must right themselves, without our interference." And then in a lighter tone she added:

"We shall be delighted to go and stay with you and Nelly, since you have so kindly—so generously forgiven our long silence and invited us to go to you . . ." Then she turned to Jacqueline and said whimsically:

"Do you really think I shall be able to stand that odious sea passage to Dover, Jacqueline?"

"Of course you will, darling," said Jacqueline, who having gathered herself together, smiled at her mother and spoke in her old domineering way, "for shan't I be there to look after you?"

At Jacqueline's tone the three women began to

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laugh, and the strain was at once relieved, for it seemed that with her old wilful and commanding spirit Jacqueline's equanimity had suddenly returned to her once more.

And all was well again in Françoise's tender, loving heart.

CHAPTER XVI

So one bright morning in May, Françoise and Jacqueline, accompanied by the faithful Clémence, closed up the flat in Paris and leaving it in charge of the concierge, who kept the key of it and promised to go up twice a week to dust it—took the train at the Gare du Nord for Calais. They were to cross by the Calais-Dover boat in the daytime, for Françoise, who, as she had herself declared, was quite an old-fashioned type of Frenchwoman in the matter of travelling, feared a passage across the Channel in the darkness. They lunched in the train leaving Clémence to look after their bags in the first-class compartment while they went into the restaurant car. Clémence, with the thriftiness that characterises the women of her class, and which sometimes, though very rarely in these modern days, they bring to bear upon the interests of their employers, had scorned the idea of allowing *madame* to pay five francs for her luncheon.

"Que madame et mademoiselle déjeûnent dans le train, c'est bien . . . mais pas moi . . . ?"

"But you must have lunch too!" Jacqueline had objected.

"*Oui*—but I'll manage. *Mademoiselle* need not worry about me. I'll take care of myself."

So while Françoise and her daughter had left the carriage, leaving Clémence alone, the worthy woman who had never travelled since she had left her own

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Vosgian village twenty-five years before, drew the substantial repast which she had prepared for herself out of a canvas bag, that had never left her hand since she had departed from home that morning. Upon several occasions Jacqueline had laughingly asked her what she carried in the mysterious receptacle, but Clémence had always put her off with evasive air:

"Ça, c'est des affaires à moi . . . ça n'intéresse pas mademoiselle." And she had refused to gratify the curiosity of the girl any further.

The bag had been made by Clémence herself in her spare hours, in view of her London trip. It was of coarse unbleached linen canvas made in the shape of an elongated sausage slit along the top, the aperture being bound round with scarlet braid and affording a view of a scarlet twill lining. The side seams were also bound round with the red braid and the two handles made of strong thick twine were covered with twill like the lining. There were Clémence's initials, "C. S." worked in cross-stitching in scarlet cotton on the front of the bag. Into this trusty repository Clémence had amassed all her treasures, besides the lusty meal she had prepared for the journey, there were several toilet articles, including a small mirror and a bottle of Eau de Mélisse in view of the possible horrors of sea-sickness. There were three or four large, thick linen handkerchiefs, embroidered also in red cotton cross-stitching "C. S." and there was a small *livre de Messe*, with an *image de Sainteté* serving as a book-mark at the page upon which the prayers

for the dying were set. For Clémence as she stepped upon the steamboat that would carry her to England, was resolved to be ready to meet even death itself if necessary—stoically and like a good Catholic. The entire bottom of the bag was lined with half-pound packets of Ménier's chocolate.

The long railway journey, not to mention the sea-passage, constituted in Clémence's mind a very big undertaking, which necessitated a great deal of moral and material sustainment that could only be obtained in her opinion from a large and hearty meal. Three hard-boiled eggs seasoned with some salt from a small paper cornucopia and accompanied by a pound of crisp, golden-crust bread, formed a substantial groundwork as an *hors d'oeuvre*. A thick piece of cold beefsteak was next consumed, and Clémence, having brought a small kitchen plate of white china with her, was able to cut it up into large square chunks which she washed down at intervals with a litre of strong red wine. Next came a fine slice of gruyère cheese, followed by a small phial of excellent black coffee, well-sweetened, which she had wrapped in a flannel to keep warm. To Clémence as to all French servants, her food was the item of greatest importance in her existence. She could be most devoted to her mistress at times, and in illness specially she was a veritable treasure; but to no creature on earth, and to no exterior or interior consideration would Clémence have sacrificed the plenitude of her repast. If she was forced to live "*chez les autres*," that was to be regretted indeed, but was not that precisely one

of the reasons why she should be well fed? she asked. Was not that her chief compensation, since she was forced to live in the "houses of others?" And according to Clémence no one was well fed who did not consume a pound of bread, and a bottle of red wine at each meal besides other items, both at midday and at seven o'clock in the evening, like all good Christians! When Françoise had told Clémence that in England, with Mrs. Brent's servants, she would probably enjoy a more solid breakfast than she was accustomed to in France, but that she would have no evening dinner of meat, she was aghast.

"*Comment! On est des sauvages en 'Angleterre, alors?*"

"Not exactly," replied Françoise laughing. "But Mrs. Brent tells me that English people do not give their servants late dinner."

After having declared that she hated England and all things English, and that nothing would induce her to put her foot upon English soil, Clémence had nevertheless been influenced by Jacqueline's description of English life, and now was really keen to go to England. But she could not reconcile herself to the idea of an English menu.

"*Des sauvages, quoi!*"

Nothing else could be got from her but that appreciation of English customs. But at the bottom of her uncouth canvas bag she had concealed not only several pounds of Ménier's chocolate, but also two very long rolls of *saucisson de Lyon*, as well as three boxes of sardines. "*Comme ça*, I shall lack nothing

in the land of the *sauvages*, if they try to make me die of hunger," she had muttered to herself as she packed it carefully, wrapping parchment paper around the *saucisson* to keep it fresh. And though even Françoise herself, puzzled by the appearance of Clémence's wonderful travelling kit, made endeavours at repeated intervals to discover what she might be hiding, Clémence always refused to tell.

"*C'est des affaires à moi*," she replied invariably, putting her hand over the opening of the bag and drawing it close to her, as though she feared that her *patronne* would inspect its contents by force.

On the boat Françoise in terror of sea-sickness, went down into the ladies' cabin with Clémence, and stretching herself out on the comfortable chintz-covered berth, resigned herself to her fate, with a bottle of smelling salts in one hand and a handkerchief saturated with *eau de Cologne* in the other. Jacqueline, intending to remain on deck during the short passage, went down to settle her mother and the old servant comfortably, and then tying a wide motor veil over her close grey toque went up on board. Pacing the deck she met two young English girls who were doing likewise. As Jacqueline went to lean up against the side of the deck railing the two girls followed her, and the younger one smilingly addressed her.

"Are you a good sailor?" she asked.

"Yes, I think so," said Jacqueline bravely. "This is the first time I've crossed, but I don't mind the shaking. It's more invigorating than otherwise," she added as the turbine trembled a little.

"We are just returning from our first trip to Paris," volunteered the young English girl.

"Oh!" said Jacqueline, interested at once. "*I* am just about to pay my first visit to London!"

"I wonder how you will like London after Paris?" said the young girl again. "You will find it very different indeed."

"How did you like Paris?" inquired Jacqueline.

"Like Paris! We adored it," said the girl, "but we were so sorry not to be able to meet any French people—inhabitants of Paris I mean. We stayed in a hotel in the rue Caumartin and were all the time among English people."

"Parisians do not live at hotels, and of course you would never meet them there," said Jacqueline. "Did you not have any letters of introduction when you arrived? The only way to meet French people, and to see them as they are, is to be received into their own homes."

"Is it difficult for English people to know the French in their intimate life?" asked the elder of the two girls, a young woman of about twenty-six.

"Yes," said Jacqueline, who having met English hospitality at the house of the Brents knew the difference between the two nations in family customs. "You see the home in France is far more closed to strangers than the English home. French people do not admit strangers into their intimacy as quickly or as easily as the English do."

"I am glad that English hospitality is what it is,"

said the elder girl proudly. "But tell me why the French family is so closed?"

"Oh, for a multitude of reasons. But first of all because of the manner in which young girls and young men are brought up. The average French mother does not allow her daughter to meet any young men before her own marriage, and would fight shy of admitting English girls into the intimacy of her own daughters because she would be afraid of their learning too much independence from the young woman so liberally trained."

And then Jacqueline told them of her friendship with Nelly Brent and explained how her friend's independence had influenced her own.

"Very few French girls have been brought up as freely as I have been," she told the two sisters. "Most mothers disapprove of the liberty which my mother has always given me. What we call *l'éducation à l'anglaise* is only just beginning to be admitted in French society. It is coming though. Great strides have been made already and many others will follow."

The conversation thus engaged proceeded almost during the whole of the crossing. As the outlines of the English coast were becoming visible in the distance, the elder girl turned to Jacqueline and asked simply:

"Where are you going to stop in London?"

"At a place called Kensington."

"Oh! we live not far from there!" exclaimed the younger of the two girls, whom Jacqueline had heard

addressed as Janet. "We live at Notting Hill, close by."

"Heel Nottingue," repeated Jacqueline slowly, with her pretty accent. "I will try to remember that name."

The older girl addressed Jacqueline awkwardly.

"I wonder," she said with a blush, "I wonder if you would come and see us while you are in London?"

Jacqueline was not astonished at the sudden invitation from the two strangers. She understood that both the girls were genuinely interested in her.

"I should be very pleased," she said, "you are very kind. My name is Jacqueline Réville, and I am going to stay with my friend, Mrs. Brent."

"Oh! the Brents? Do you know them?" Janet broke in impetuously with a smile on her face. "I used to go to school with Nelly Brent. Yes. And now I remember, she lives at Kensington."

"I've known them a long time. I met Nelly at the Sorbonne, where we were both studying. She lived in Paris three years with her aunt. We became great friends and I used to speak English with her nearly always."

"And what has become of her brother, Oliver? I've heard that he's a great artist. The papers announced that his picture at this year's Academy was a great success."

Jacqueline blushed to the roots of her hair.

"Mr. Brent lives in Paris. He is an artist of some repute there. His Academy picture is my portrait,"

she said with some embarrassment. "You will be sure to recognize it."

And anxious to avoid any further reference to Oliver she turned to the elder girl again.

"Won't you tell me your name?"

"Oh, certainly! I am Elsie Thornton, and this is my sister Janet Thornton. We were both educated at a high school and later on in Germany and Brussels. We live with our father and mother. We've got a brother who is in business in the city. . . ."

"You'll discover after you have been in England some time that most young Englishmen of our class are 'something in the city,' when they don't go out to the Colonies," interrupted Janet laughing.

"I think that's about all there is to know about us," pursued Elsie, undisturbed by her sister's remark. "Here's our address, on one of mother's cards," and she held out a card with an address written upon it in ink.

"Be sure you come to see us, and let us know if there is anything we can do for you in London. We shall be delighted to be of use to you."

Jacqueline thanked them warmly, and as the coast of England was now in sight, she went down to her mother in the cabin below.

"Well, and how's the sea been treating you, mother?" she inquired gently, as she bent over the prostrate lady.

Françoise replied in a low voice.

"I feel that so long as I do not budge an inch, I

shall not be ill. But please don't make me get up till we are in the harbour, dearest."

"All right, mother. We've really had a beautiful passage," and then spying Clémence stretched full-length and face downwards in a berth nearby groaning, and bending over a receptacle which she tried in vain to hide from Jacqueline's alert gaze:

"*Eh bien, ma bonne Clémence!* And how are you faring?" She placed her cool hand with a comforting gesture on the forehead of the good woman as she spoke.

"Ah, *mademoiselle!* *Quels sauvages que ces Anglais d'avoir inventé une mer pareille!*"

"But it is not the fault of the English if the sea is a little rough and you've been sick, Clémence! You really ought not to make them responsible for it," said Jacqueline smiling.

"*Vrai? C'est pas leur faute?*"

"I assure you it isn't," replied Jacqueline, now laughing outright. "*Allons, cheer up, Clémence!* We've just got into the harbour. The rolling has ceased. Be your own brave self again, and help me to look after *maman*."

A galooned official now came around to inspect all the hand-baggage on board. Clémence, ill though she was, pulled herself together at the sight of him and rose from her recumbent position just in time to snatch her beloved bag from his grasp.

"*Qu'est ce qu'il veut, cet imbecile?*" she inquired of Jacqueline. "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" she murmured to herself, as the inspector put out his hand to

take the bag. She was most anxious that Jacqueline should not know of her store of chocolate, which according to her belief was to save her from complete starvation in the land of the *sauvages*. But Jacqueline guessed what she had there and took a keen delight in teasing the good woman.

"You *must* show it, you know, Clémence. And I suppose you understand that you will be immediately marched off to the nearest English prison if they find any such things as French chocolate or *saucisson* or even gruyère cheese in your possession. The king of England does not allow such things to enter his dominions." And Jacqueline put on a very serious expression.

Clémence turned more livid than even seasickness could make her.

"*C'est-il vrai? Mademoiselle, c'est-il vrai?*" she gasped in terror.

"Yes, it's quite true, isn't it?" said Jacqueline, turning to the Customs House officer for reference.

"Yes," answered that official smiling, and appreciating the joke. But seeing Clémence's look of real terror, he added consolingly:

"But we'll let the lady off this time if she has any of these articles in her possession, as it is her first visit to England."

He made a polite bow to Clémence and smiled at Jacqueline as he passed on to examine another bag.

"*Dieu soit loué!*" whispered Clémence to Jacqueline as she watched his retreating form. "*Il est tout de même amiable, cet imbécile!*" She was so relieved

at having spared her bag from the man's investigation that she confessed her provision of edibles at once. "To tell you the truth, *mademoiselle*, I am so afraid of dying of hunger in the house of Madame Brent, among those *sauvages* of English servants, that I have brought a few tablets of chocolate from Paris with me to appease my hunger if necessary."

"A few tablets!" laughed Jacqueline, lifting the bag and weighing it on her strong arm. "A few tablets, indeed! A fine consignment, Clémence, to judge by the weight of your bag! You monster, Clémence! I should say there is at least a thousand francs duty on this. What would King Edward say if he only knew it!"

"Ah, but he doesn't know it!" cried Clémence victoriously, as if she had scored a triumph over His Majesty of England. Jacqueline's shoulders shook with silent mirth.

"*Quel pays de sauvages, tout de même!*" muttered the old servant again to herself as she tied an *écharpe* that Jacqueline had given her firmly over her black hat and hastened to help her mistress to rise.

But Clémence's troubles among the "*sauvages*" had only just begun. For the next few weeks she had but one word ever upon her lips, with which she freely addressed all porters, tradespeople, waiters and cabmen indiscriminately, and that was the word "*imbécile*." She was delighted to learn from Jacqueline that such a word was not often used in English and was not understood when uttered by a foreigner. So

she pronounced it upon every conceivable occasion, and it greatly eased her mind when she did.

After they had landed in England, Jacqueline was obliged to take the entire direction of the small party of French travellers in hand, neither Françoise nor Clémence being able to speak a single word of English.

At Dover Françoise wanted a tea-basket, and Jacqueline was obliged for the first time to speak in English, to pay the waiter and to count the change of an English sovereign with which she had paid for the tea. She found shillings and pence most bewildering, and Clémence, in a perpetual state of ill-temper with everything in England, declared that surely the "*vilains sauvages*" had cheated *mademoiselle*. Jacqueline's English, acquired first in Paris from the academical Pomm and then at the Lycée, and finally broadened out afterwards by her conversations with the most modern of English maidens in the person of Nelly Brent, was amusing to say the least. It was a curious composition of very literary expressions culled from Shakespeare and the older poets, and very up-to-date modern forms of English school slang, carefully inoculated by Nelly, whose great delight was to hear Jacqueline use words she did not understand in the least.

At Victoria they found Nelly and Mrs. Brent on the platform waiting for them.

"Jacqueline!" cried Nelly with delight as soon as she caught sight of Jacqueline's tall, slim figure in

the carriage as she reached upwards for the umbrellas in the rack.

"*Voilà Nelly!*" cried Jacqueline to her mother in her turn. And as she flew into her friend's arms on the platform she greatly shocked an old gentleman who had travelled up in the same carriage with them from Dover, and had been greatly admiring the young French girl's good manners on the way, by exclaiming:

"Here we are, dear old chappie!"

After some delay at the Customs, which once again forced Clémence into injurious language concerning savages and imbeciles, their luggage was put on to a barrow and taken to the District Railway by a porter, *en route* for Kensington. As they left the station and passed into the open air, Françoise and Jacqueline were both immediately struck with the sight of the busy streets beyond and would willingly have sauntered out for a walk of inspection there and then. But Nelly and Mrs. Brent hurried them along with Clémence in tow already freely using abusive language to those people in the street who pushed up against her and threatened to knock her bag with its supposed fraudulent freight of chocolate and *saucisson* out of her hand.

Soon they found themselves in a train on the District Railway bound for Kensington. Jacqueline ensconced herself at once in a corner of the carriage and opened her eyes wide as she passed all the District Railway stations—Victoria, Sloane Square and Gloucester Road in succession.

"Well, Jacqueline!" said Nelly, sitting close beside her and amused to see her friend so interested in the waiting crowds assembled upon the platforms, "Well, what is your first impression of England and the English?"

"Most of your people appear to me to be so sad—at least to-day they do," said Jacqueline, "and I don't suppose they have put on that expression only for us, so I surmise that it is their usual one. But are they always like that? And is your city always as gloomy and dull? What a thick atmosphere!"

"Do you think so?" said Nelly reflectively. "Yes; I suppose the people must strike you as dull as their own climate, after the gay Parisian crowd."

"They have no expressions at all upon their faces," said Jacqueline. "They look as if life held no hope at all for them. At least that's how they impress me at first sight. How do you account for that, Nelly?"

"I don't know," said Nelly, leaving her seat and taking the empty place opposite to Jacqueline by the side of the window. "Unless it's the effect of the climate, which is most depressing here in the winter time. . . ."

"But now it is spring," said Jacqueline laughing.

"Yes. But they remember the winter, you see!" said Nelly, joining in her friend's infectious laughter.

"I think, Nelly," said Jacqueline with mock gravity, "I think—indeed I am afraid—that you are growing into a philosopher."

"Gracious me!" put in good Mrs. Brent here,

shaking the yellow cowslips on her bonnet threateningly at Jacqueline as she spoke. "Gracious me! You've hardly yet set your foot upon English soil and you are already calling Nelly bad names!"

At which remark the girls gave way to an uproarious fit of laughter, in which the "mothers" joined.

"What fun we are going to have here together," said Mrs. Brent, when she had regained some composure. "Why, it will be like our dear *Peupliers* days all over again."

At the mention of *Les Peupliers*, Françoise, looking at her daughter, noted that not the slightest quivering moved her features. She understood that Jacqueline's sad memories were indeed fading into total oblivion, and her heart was full of joy.

When the merry party reached Kensington, their luggage was again hoisted on to a barrow and wheeled away by a railroad porter, while Mrs. Brent and Nelly conducted their friends on foot to Rose Lodge, which was only a few yards away.

As soon as they got into the dimly-lighted, warm-aired hall, their impression of England was transformed at once. If outside in the streets many things had struck them as ugly, unfinished, here at least it seemed that luxury, comfort and good taste were combined to charm and to attract the incoming stranger.

"Welcome to England, and to Rose Lodge!" cried Mrs. Brent as they entered. And she kissed Françoise again heartily and folded Jacqueline once more

into the depths of her embrace, her wide, old-fashioned black cloth cape flapping backwards and forwards and keeping company with the long loose strings of her small, high-perched bonnet. "Welcome, dear friends; we are so happy to have you in our English home at last!"

"So glad to have you here, old girl!" said Nelly to Jacqueline, shaking her by the hand.

To the right of the hall a flight of stairs carpeted with a warm carpeting of pale-blue felt covered with white linen druggeting in the centre, led up to the bedrooms. Here Françoise and Jacqueline were immediately installed in two small, charming rooms side by side, each provided with two wide bay-shaped windows that gave a fine view of the smooth lawn and of the garden beyond. This contained beds of many old-fashioned flowers mingling in happy harmony with currant bushes and strawberry plants. Fine trees surrounded it on all sides, closing it in from the view of other old gardens beyond, which formed the grounds of an old Catholic Convent where peaceful nuns chanted hymns as they walked along the gravel paths, and the tinkling bell of their chapel called them into their evening meal.

Rose Lodge stood in its own grounds. It was an old-fashioned house, built in the early years of the nineteenth century when the fine architectural lines of the later eighteenth century still haunted the dreams of English architects. The broad windows of the dining- and drawing-rooms on the ground floor were slightly bow-shaped and gave a generous view

of the fine velvety lawn, springy to the touch of the foot, as only an old English lawn can be. The garden delighted Françoise and Jacqueline specially, and appeared to them as a fine example of the triumphant Anglo-Saxon spirit that successfully coerces even rebellious Nature herself; for it is precisely in England, where the climate is so unsympathetic to outdoor enjoyments, that foreigners do not expect to find delightful and entrancing pleasaunces.

The house itself also was characteristically suggestive of the better class of English *bourgeois* with its numerous small bedrooms so necessary to the love of individual privacy of each member of a large family. On the ground floor was a spacious drawing-room, out of which one could pass into a small conservatory beyond, where a vine, the pride of Mrs. Brent's heart, when laboriously tended yielded two or three bunches of grapes each year. The dining-room, next to the drawing-room, was a wide, low-ceilinged room, with a bow-window, and was furnished with old Chippendale furniture. On the left of the hall was a small library, which formerly had been the sanctum of the late Mr. John Brent when he retired from the company of his gushing spouse, to smoke a peaceful and solitary pipe alone.

Two white-capped, white-aproned, black-gowned female servants formed the whole of Mrs. Brent's retinue. To these, eyeing them with deep suspicion, Clémence was introduced with due formality, and by them, her bag still grasped in her right hand, she was led downstairs to the region of the kitchen. They

immediately offered her the national solace of a cup of tea. But it was brewed so strong that Clémence, with more celerity than politeness put it back on the kitchen table by the side of a plate of bread and butter which had accompanied it, murmuring to herself "*sale medecine!*"

However, as soon as the cook's back was turned and the house-parlour maid began to lay the cloth for the dinner upstairs, Clémence, turning to the faithful bag which had never left her side a single moment since her departure from Paris, thrust a hasty but deft hand into its open aperture, and extracting from its depths a tablet of chocolate began to munch it with evident relish, alternating with large bites out of a slice of bread and butter.

The next morning Clémence, with tired eyes and a rueful countenance, brought Madame Réville's breakfast to her on a tray.

"*Eh bien, Clémence,*" she asked, "*Comment avez-vous dormi?*"

"*Ah!*" sighed Clémence, rubbing her shins ruefully, "*ces misérables!* Surely the mattress of my bed must have been stuffed with peach-stones, for I am black and blue all over me this morning!"

For another national prejudice which Clémence shared with most of her class was her great predilection for soft bedding. Evidently she had found the flat English mattress so hard that she could not sleep all night long.

"You'll get used to it soon, Clémence," said Françoise, trying to comfort and persuade her at the same

time. "To-night your bed will seem softer to you, and the next night softer still, and then after that you won't notice any difference at all between the bed upstairs and your own at home."

"*Ah! que si, madame!*" insisted Clémence. "*C'est pas des gens possibles, les Anglais, que je vous dis!* If I can't get any sleep to-night, then I return to Paris to-morrow. I warn *madame!*" And with that threat Clémence bounced out of the room.

"I think I'll mix a sleeping powder with her chocolate if she still persists in getting no sleep to-night," said Jacqueline, who had entered the room during this conversation. "We shall have her deserting us the next day, to return to a more civilized land, if something is not done to appease her!"

"Well, if she's unhappy here, of course she may go home," said Françoise.

"Oh, she'll be all right in a day or two," laughed Jacqueline.

CHAPTER XVII

Now began for Françoise and Jacqueline a series of outings and sightseeings which delighted them greatly.

This being their first visit to England they had much to see and to interest them. They were taken to the National Gallery and to the National Portrait Gallery the day after their arrival. And then followed in succession all the sights of London, beginning by the South Kensington Museum and ending up with the Tower. But what interested them even more—indeed far more—than the museums and sights of London, were the people in the streets and the whole life of the country as it revealed itself outwardly to their fresh, unimpaired observation. It seemed almost incredible to them that a country so near to them could yet be so far by reason of its customs, traditions and mentality. They began now to see England through English eyes. The British nation appeared to them a totally different thing when viewed from the inside than when observed from without. Because the faults of the English are faults of manner, rather than of heart, their worst characteristics appear on the surface and, as their best are not at once apparent, the uninitiated foreigner, therefore, sees them first at a disadvantage. But now all the narrower or more superficial prejudices against

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the English, which Françoise and Jacqueline had acquired against their will, began to drop away from them one by one. What they had once termed English hypocrisy they now understood better, realizing that it stood for a great good, and that it was owing to it that women and girls were respected throughout England and the national dignity thus upheld. What once they had considered as *la morgue Britannique* they now understood to be but a very timid reserve—the reserve of a shy and self-conscious people who are afraid to give way to their own emotions.

Of the improbity which Napoleon thrust upon England as her greatest fault, when he apostrophied her as *perfide Albion*, Madame Réville and her daughter found not a trace among their new friends. On the contrary, they soon discovered that English friends were true and loyal to the core, and that the excellent libel laws of England did much to suppress in English social relations the habits of “potins” which are so disturbing to friendly intercourse in France.

By mixing freely with English girls and young men of her own age, Jacqueline, taking every advantage of the wide hospitality that is shown to strangers in England, veered round entirely away from her old standard of opinions gathered abroad concerning the English, which are as generally erroneous as are the corresponding opinions of the majority of the English concerning their foreign neighbours.

As soon as they had arrived at Rose Lodge,

Jacqueline had told Nelly about the meeting with the Thornton girls, and found that Nelly remembered them quite well. She had not seen them since she had left the High School, but declared that she would be delighted to see them again. So Jacqueline wrote a polite little note to Elsie Thornton asking her to come to tea at Rose Lodge with her sister.

After a first visit, the Thorntons became their inseparable companions on all their sightseeing expeditions. The sisters were simple, healthy creatures, without temperament or artistic tastes, but they possessed sterling common sense and kindly hearts, and Jacqueline found their insular point of view most enlightening to her in many ways, revealing insights into the British character which she would not otherwise have had the opportunity of judging, at least with such equity.

Their brother, Robert Thornton, who held a small post in a large business house in the city, was above all a fervent cricketer, golfer and footballer, and he devoted every possible holiday to his favourite games. In fact the days upon which he went to a match were to him the most important days of the week. He was far more interested in all sports than he was in his office work, which he performed merely perfunctorily and as a simple matter of necessity. He was a typical young Englishman of his nation and class. Stolid, unobservant, unintellectual and uncultured, but sterlingly loyal, kindly and generous. He soon too became an *habitué* at Rose Lodge, where with his sisters he was invited to play

tennis with Nelly and Jacqueline. Both his sisters were devoted to him, and looked up to what they considered to be his superior opinion in all things, based solely upon the fact that he was a man. Of real mental value he had none, but he was eminently trustworthy. He was typically British in his love for all those kinds of outdoor games at which he was most proficient, and he was also devoted to animals. The great cricket matches at Lord's were his one great passion; he took no interest in politics, literature or the drama. He discharged his duties in the city punctiliously to the best of his ability, and as conscientiously as he could. But, nevertheless, his office-work was a mere function which made no real demands upon him. Because of their community of interests, Robert Thornton and Nelly Brent quickly became friends, and in order to discuss questions of great import together on matters of cricket, which was their common passion, they often left the others and wandered off into the more secluded parts of the garden together. Soon it became customary for Robert to come and fetch Nelly on half holidays to take her off to some great match that called thousands of spectators to Lord's cricket grounds. Indeed so congenial did the two young people appear to be, that Mrs. Brent confided one day to Françoise that she would not be surprised if such devotion did not "end in a match that certainly would not be celebrated at Lord's."

To Jacqueline, Robert Thornton was a source of great interest. To her critical sense he appeared

as a fine specimen of the splendid uncouth barbarian—a big, raw-boned fellow provided with the kindest of hearts and the smallest of brains. His fair, flushed pink face with his almost white eyelashes and eye-brows, his pale, colourless eyes, his silver-fair hair brushed down straight and sleek close to his rather flat skull, all combined to emphasise his resemblance to a salmon. By observing Robert, Jacqueline learnt to understand more of the indomitable British character and to admire it more than she had ever thought to admire. Robert Thornton's fine moral courage, although curiously mingled with the most blunted faculties of perception, his equitable rectitude and integrity, even though often it accompanied the most crass ignorance of facts, made of him an excellent specimen of manhood. She contrasted him favourably with many of the young fortune hunters of her own country, who, though they might excel in the art of making wonderfully poetical compliments to ladies, were mostly incapable of sacrificing a single one of their cherished material interests to any woman.

Robert's dogged conviction was that the English could never be beaten, either because an Englishman never knew when he was worsted, or he would not acknowledge it if he were, or again, because in the end whatever happened the Briton always came out victorious. And these opinions of Robert's indicated the true British spirit which in itself was a revelation to Jacqueline's French-trained mind. Though hitherto her emotional and affective qualities could only

be aroused by her intellectual admiration, she was now forced, nevertheless, into a great respect for Robert because of the soundness of his moral character. She began to discover that there was something more to be sought in a man than charm or even culture, and though he would have been astonished to have learnt it, Robert Thornton helped considerably to draw Jacqueline's opinion upon men in general to a higher plane. Henceforth she greatly valued such ethical qualities as were revealed to her through the medium of this very commonplace British lad. Unconsciously he had offered her a new point of view, from which now she could test those moral and ethical qualities which formerly she had been inclined to underrate in her admiration for intellectual supremacy.

Robert was totally unused to the society of ladies, and was at first particularly shy with Françoise and her daughter. He declared to his friend Nelly that "most ladies were bad enough, but French ladies were a bit too much" for him! Jacqueline's excessive daintiness appeared to him as "fussy," and as for Françoise, he declared that he was always afraid of "seeing her break into bits!"

"But you are the kind of girl for me!" Robert had added, addressing his first compliment to Nelly herself. "What you don't know about games and pets is not worth knowing!"

After this declaration the *camaraderie* between Nelly and Robert grew apace, as simple and as unaffected as the *camaraderie* of two boys. No emotional

thoughts troubled them, no intellectual interests appealed to them. They were like two healthy, young animals, amused with games as a young puppy is amused with running after a ball. They became inseparable companions and their difference of sex, which counted for so little in both of them, created no barrier between them.

During their stay in London, Françoise was delighted to see how well Jacqueline was taking to English ways and customs, behaving exactly as a young English girl of her age. By degrees her coquetry was disappearing, for she found no scope for its development. She seemed now to the vigilant eyes of her mother to have forgotten, not only Jérôme, but also her resentment against Oliver, and probably even Oliver himself. She appeared to be in process of reconstructing her own soul upon a newer, simpler basis, and meanwhile was enjoying her stay in England to the utmost. Almost daily she went out shopping and sightseeing alone, or with Nelly and the Thornton girls, sometimes even with Robert alone.

One evening Robert announced that he had two seats for a play. He would greatly have preferred asking Nelly to accompany him, as he told her himself, but Jacqueline was a foreigner and a visitor, so he decided to invite her to go with him instead. "In France a young man would never think of asking a young girl out alone to the theatre," said Jacqueline smilingly, "but as I am able to fly in the face of all French convention here, I shall be only too pleased to accept your kind offer."

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And she went off gaily with Robert, who fetched her at Rose Lodge in the evening at half-past seven after a somewhat hurried meal. They went up by the District Railway from Kensington station to Charing Cross and then walked to the theatre. Jacqueline amused herself by comparing the attitude of Robert with that of a young Frenchman of his years. This tall, rather shy young man of twenty-seven, in great contrast to the young Frenchmen of his age, was awkward with women, and not being interested in any other subject than that of sport, found that he had very few subjects upon which he could talk to Jacqueline. But Jacqueline took the initiative, and managed to draw him out of his shell, and to get him to talk about various English out-door games, comparing them with some of the older games of the kind known in France. Grateful for her sympathy, he somewhat expanded and at one of the stations—leaning out of the window—he called to a newsboy to bring him an evening paper to show her. Greatly to Jacqueline's satisfaction he explained to her the meaning of the posters of the various evening papers, heralding the cricket scores at the more famous sporting centres. To her these items of interest, which she had seen every afternoon in the streets of London printed in large letters on wide sheets of pink paper flapping in the wind as the shrieking news-vendors rushed along, had been far more difficult than Greek to her understanding. Hitherto she had not realized the importance of these questions in the eyes of a nation almost exclu-

sively interested in sport. Robert, paper in hand, now expounded to her in detail the mysteries of the sporting news of the sheet so sacred to the British clerk. And by the time they had arrived at the theatre, Robert told himself that for a "beastly foreigner," Jacqueline was really a "good sort."

At the theatre, Jacqueline was amused by the audience in the stalls, where the better dressed people of the theatre sat motionless and expressionless waiting the rise of the curtain with forbearing patience. It seemed to her that they were imbued with a terrible earnestness, taking their pleasure at the theatre as a thing of momentous issue.

"What a serious business their pleasure apparently is to them," said Jacqueline. "If this were a French theatre all the people would be chattering like magpies."

"Would they?" said Robert, without much interest.

He was neither observant nor introspective, and the relative characteristics of English and French audiences did not appeal to him.

The play was of the kind called a musical comedy. Notwithstanding her knowledge of English, Jacqueline followed the plot of the story with great difficulty. There was a king who was not really a king, and another man—a very funny person—who was married to a very pompous and disagreeable lady. The facetious gentleman was continually being offered the post of king, though he himself was always trying to avoid the responsibilities of kingship.

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Then there was a very pretty princess, the daughter of the funny man. She loved the real king, who, for some reason not made clear, was hiding. It was very complicated and Jacqueline had to give up trying to understand the plot, as the rest of the audience probably had to do also. But evidently that did not prevent them from being interested in the play, so Jacqueline followed their example and amused herself too by listening to the rather vapid music that was a sort of pot-pourri of various well-known popular songs mixed with reminiscences of other operettas. Sometimes—and always when she least expected him—the funny man came on and staggered about the stage quite meaninglessly, but amusingly because of his very absurdity, banging his head against the cardboard tree-trunks of the *mise-en-scène* in his frenzied fear of being appointed king. Then he went off and a chorus of short-skirted, large-hatted village girls appeared waving bouquets of poppies and wheat ears, though for no apparent reason. Then they sang some songs, but what they were about no one even tried to guess. A duet sung by the lovers together then followed and, as soon as they disappeared, then the jocose man appeared once more. It was all quite ridiculous, but funny, not with any wit of its own but because of its wild, childish extravagance.

Jacqueline laughed often, but not in the same places nor for the same reasons as Robert, who kept repeating each time the funny man went off the stage:

“Isn’t he clever! Isn’t he clever!”

And though his cleverness was a mere trick for buffoonery, he certainly kept the house in fits of laughter, and appeared to be a great favourite.

Between the acts Jacqueline was amused to see that the solemnity of the audience was at once resumed. These good people, she told herself, were evidently here to have quite a serious evening of fun. . . .

Robert accompanied Jacqueline back to Rose Lodge and helped her to unlock the door with the latchkey with which Mrs. Brent had entrusted her before she had left. As soon as she had got inside the door, Robert bade her good-night and set forth for Notting Hill on foot.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Jacqueline had been two months in London, she wrote a long letter to Pomm, with whom Françoise had regularly corresponded during her London visit, but who complained of never having received a single letter from Jacqueline.

ROSE LODGE, KENSINGTON, LONDON.

MY DEAR POMM :

Maman chérie tells me that you wish me to write you, to give you my impressions of England and the English. Well, I am going to try to do so. So far I have not been long enough in England to be capable of judging English people adequately. I can only give you my impression of their ways and customs, and tell you how they strike me as being so very different to our own compatriots. Yet I have gained so many divers and even conflicting impressions that although I have the greatest desire to be entirely just, you must forgive me if at times I appear to be somewhat obscure in my meaning.

To begin with, from the very first day I arrived, I was particularly struck with the look of sadness, of depression and even of unintelligence of the people one meets in the street. I cannot exactly describe it to you otherwise than by Nelly's word, "glum." (If you don't know this word, look it up in the diction-

ary!) I can quite understand now why those English people of the middle classes who can afford it make frequent trips to Paris to be cheered up at the *Moulin Rouge* and those similar establishments which are kept up solely for their benefit. I can quite appreciate why it is that they enjoy the change which Parisian naughtiness, however shocking, must afford them. For however improper such entertainments may be, they must at least provide them with a healthy reaction against their own apparent stolidity. I suppose, however, that this British dullness is largely the result of the English climate. Indeed, in the poorer quarters of London, the first few days we were here, it so affected us that *maman* and I were always looking out for the hearse that we thought *must* be ahead—for all the people in the streets looked as if they were attending a funeral. Not only are faces expressionless and eyes melancholy, but a large number of the poorer London crowd go about with their mouths open, which gives them a silly look!

The poorer working classes seem to lack taste, for their women are not only badly but, more often inappropriately, dressed. The very poorest do not have plain and serviceable clothes made for themselves, but generally wear out the old clothes of richer people, which gives one the impression that even in their grime they are most gorgeously overdressed. An old woman selling oranges in the streets yesterday, near the entrance of the National Portrait Gallery, wore an almost threadbare black velvet

mantle trimmed with chenille fringe which must have been made at least thirty years ago. The pile of the velvet was almost entirely worn away and the warp of the material was a dirty, rusty brown. The trimming pulled off in parts hung in wisps where it was still visible. Another woman I saw at the door of Westminster Abbey holding a ragged child of about four years of age by the hand, and another baby of a few months on her arm, was dressed in an old violet plush gown, and had a small deerstalker's cap of brown tweed on her head! The older child wore a dress of dirty white embroidery and a Dutch bonnet of green velvet trimmed with fur. And all these garments were thick with grime, with filth and unnamable horrors, and hung literally in tatters from their shivering bodies. So much for the lower classes. Nevertheless they appear to wish to be smart, and servant girls wear feathered hats even when they have their aprons tied around their waists and hanging from beneath their jackets.

The *bourgeoisie* which here is called the middle class, dress badly too, and have no sense of fitness either. It amuses *maman* even more than it does me to see hats of spangled tulle or of transparent gold net obviously designed for evening wear only, worn in the streets by ladies who are out on foot shopping or calling at their *fournisseurs*, and large feathered hats, suitable for carriage wear for some society function, worn in omnibuses or in the Tube Railway. Yet, though the ordinary people—both men and women—one meets in the streets each day sometimes present

quite a ludicrous appearance in the eye of the foreign beholder, they all seem blatantly satisfied with themselves. They either lack all sense of the grotesque or are imbued with a complete imperviousness to mockery, which seems astonishing to us who, as a nation, are so sensitive to ridicule, and so keenly affected by criticism. But I am bound to say that this attitude of complete indifference to outside opinion gives the English a certain personal and individual dignity which is itself so forcible—so compelling—that it precludes all ideas of mockery on our part; and we cannot laugh at them.

It seems to me that there is no comparison whatever to be established between the upper and lower classes in England. For instance, there is far less essential difference between a Russian and a Frenchman than between an English working man and an English aristocrat. You would never think that both were of the same race and of the same community. There is all the difference between them that exists between an ignorant, barbarous people and a super-civilised, cultured race. We have met two or three men here of patrician families who are interested in Art or Learning who seem to be the perfection of civilisation. Yet side by side with them in the same nation are the strong, unintelligent and often coarse individuals of the middle classes, and the debased types of the lower classes! Surely the English are the people of extremes!

But England is pre-eminently the country of aristocrats, who so far form its *classes dirigeantes*.

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Though democracy is spoken of, there seems to be no real democratic spirit as we understand it, and even the fieriest democrat seems filled with respect at the mere name of a lord! I have not yet met a single British-born subject who has not tried to persuade me of his or her noble descent! Indeed, I should think from all I can judge that democracy here is rather the intellectual attitude of a certain thoughtful set than the true inner conviction of the masses.

There is one thing that strikes one more than anything about the English of all classes, and which ought to endear them to the people of all nations, and that is their extraordinary sense of hospitality. The saying that, "the friends of our friends are our friends," ought to be considered entirely English, for the most open-hearted hospitality reigns here everywhere and welcomes you from the very shores of Great Britain. Once you have been introduced to an English family, not only are you asked to dinner at once by them and their friends, but it often happens that you are invited to spend several days in the houses of people you have seen but once or twice. You are brought right into their homes immediately as you never would be in France, for as you know, French people rarely ask their friends to stay in their houses unless they know them very well indeed. And that brings me to the question of the English home. Although the English have the word "home," they do not seem to me to have the thing itself, at least not as we understand it, for it does not correspond at all to

our word *foyer*. Perhaps it is because of their great hospitality to outsiders that the inner sacredness of the home is partially destroyed, although it is of course most delightful for the stranger. Then again, to us the English family seems more disbanded than ours, each individual being a freer creature, having a separate entity with personal interests outside. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters do not seem to be bound together by such close family ties of excessive affection as in France. Often the young men in search of a livelihood leave the paternal roof when quite young, and go to the uttermost ends of the earth. This breaks up the home circle, and later on in life, members of the same family do not seem here to be as united as they are in France, nor as morally bound to further one another's interests in life as is the case with the various members of a French family. As they do not help one another, each one of them is independent of the others, and by degrees, perhaps, independence leads to indifference.

There is one thing I notice particularly among young Englishmen, which is that each man fends for himself and makes his own career. There is very little asking of *protections* or help or favour from other people in a higher or better position, as there is with us—at least among the *bourgeoisie*. For instance, one of the friends of Mrs. Brent is the owner of a paper and a very influential man. But his own sons and nephews have begun at the very foot of the ladder in the office as mere clerks, just like all the other

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employés, and they have not sought aid, moral or material, either from their father or uncles or cousins or friends, or friends' friends, or mere acquaintances.

You will perhaps wonder how it is that I have got together so many observations concerning the customs of the English in so short a time. But you must remember that precisely because of the hospitality of this country, I have met not only quantities of people, but many kinds of people—friends of the Brents and of the Thorntons, and many friends of their friends too. We are invited everywhere with the greatest kindness, and I think we are popular wherever we go—at least we seem to be well liked. *Maman* for the sweetness and affability which you know characterizes her, and I because I can speak English and tell them all about my own country.

Maman begs me to tell you that she is quite well and is enjoying her stay here enormously. Clémence still persists in occasionally calling English people, "*des sauvages*," and cannot reconcile herself to English cooking. But she makes omelettes for the servants' supper in the kitchen now which have won her the admiration and respect of the domestics here. Also she has trimmed the housemaid a hat which has been so great a success that all the housemaids of the neighbourhood are imploring them to trim their Sunday headgear too! I tell her that she will be setting up a milliner's establishment soon in Kensington High street, but she looks at me with a roguish grin and replies:

"*Jamais de la vie!*" And then in quite another

tone adds with a sigh: "*Quand rentrons-nous à Paris, mademoiselle?*"

Dear Pomm, we miss you very much. Mrs. Brent, who is hospitality and kindness themselves combined, says you must come over here too, and though there are no book-stalls along the quays of the Thames, there are plenty of nice second-hand book-shops in London. Just think, Pomm! What undiscovered bargains there are, perhaps, to be had here!

We all join in sending you our best love and remembrances, and hope that you will summon up enough courage to reconsider your determination and come over to fetch us back later on.

Your loving friend,

JACQUELINE.

CHAPTER XIX

ONE day Nelly and Jacqueline arranged to go out shopping together in the West End, and Madame Réville and Mrs. Brent had agreed to meet them at a quarter to four at a famous tea shop in Bond Street, so that they might have the pleasure of all coming back together in a taxicab to Rose Lodge. After Jacqueline—who was delighted with the relative cheapness of such things in London, had purchased unlimited quantities of ribbons, laces and dress materials, they arrived later laden with numerous small parcels at the door of the tearoom, and met Mrs. Brent and Françoise just as they were going in. As it was comparatively early, they found as they entered the principal room of the establishment that nearly all the seats were free. They were just about to select one of the larger tables when Nelly caught sight of a young man reading a paper, which nearly obliterated him from view with its spreading pages. She gave a cry of surprise.

“Why, there’s Oliver!”

“Oliver in London?” cried Mrs. Brent. “You are mad, Nelly!”

“Not at all,” cried Nelly. “It’s Oliver. I saw him peep from behind the paper.”

And it was Oliver, who was forced to admit his identity shame-facedly enough, when Nelly impetu-

ously tore down the sheet that concealed him. As he had seen the four ladies enter the room, and recognised them, he had instinctively raised the barrier of the *Illustrated News* between himself and Jacqueline.

"Now explain yourself, sir! and your infamy, your treachery, your felony! What do you mean by coming to London secretly in this way, taking your tea alone in Bond Street and hiding from the inmates of Rose Lodge!" cried Mrs. Brent in almost breathless anger.

"Yes, we demand an explanation at once!" broke in Nelly.

"Your duplicity and base ingratitude are equally abominable," continued Mrs. Brent.

"You ought to be hanged, drawn and quartered," pursued Nelly with rage.

But Jacqueline, who hitherto had been silent and had whitened to her lips as soon as she had seen Oliver, now came forth as peacemaker and thrusting herself between the two irate women and placing a firm though tender hand upon Mrs. Brent's arm and upon Nelly's shoulder she pulled them both away from the unfortunate Oliver, thus saving him from further expostulations that seemed likely to result in actual blows.

"Gently, gently, my friends," she said smilingly. "Let the poor fellow explain himself before you put him to death!" At which sally there was a general laugh, and Mrs. Brent and Nelly fell each into a chair on either side of Jacqueline.

Jacqueline's words had had their effect. Oliver had understood that even if her resentment towards him had not entirely subsided, at least she was determined to show no trace of it before others. This put him somewhat at his ease—for his instinctive movement to hide himself behind the newspaper as the party had entered the room, was to avoid Jacqueline's confusion at seeing him. He made his explanations to his aunt quite simply.

"My dear auntie, forgive me for treating you thus. I arrived in London only this morning, having travelled all night! And I return to Paris by this evening's train. I went and had a wash up at my club and now, having contracted my business here came into this place for a quiet cup of tea."

"But why not come down to Rose Lodge?"

"Because I must get back to-morrow," said Oliver in a decided tone, that put an end to all attempts at further inquiry.

"But at least tell us why you came," put in Nelly tearfully.

"Ah! *Voilà!*" said Oliver mysteriously. And looking towards Jacqueline he added shyly, "That largely concerns Mademoiselle Jacqueline."

All eyes were turned towards Jacqueline in astonishment. But none was more amazed than Jacqueline herself.

"It concerns *me!*" exclaimed Jacqueline. "But how? I cannot understand."

"This is how," said Oliver. "It appears that a rich New Yorker,—a certain Mr. Silas P. Van der Weyde!—wants to buy the portrait of 'the modern

French girl,' now in the Academy. He declares that it is the living image of his only daughter, who died last year! He made several proposals to Hoskins, my dealer, declaring that he must have it at any cost. Hoskins wrote to me several times about it. But I absolutely refused to sell. Unfortunately Hoskins seems as keen to get Mr. Silas P. Van der Weyde for a client as Mr. Van der Weyde is to buy my picture. Van der Weyde offered him first one thousand, and then two thousand pounds for the picture, and a big commission besides. . . . I am sorry I can't let him have it . . . but as he did not seem inclined to take my refusal seriously I had to jump into a train at once, so as to be here and prevent Hoskins from being inveigled into selling against my orders."

"But why won't you sell it?" cried Nelly impetuously.

"Yes, why?" queried Mrs. Brent.

Oliver made no answer, but his eyes sought Jacqueline's face for a few seconds and seemed to ask a mute question.

"Two thousand pounds!" broke in Mrs. Brent, almost suffocated at the magnitude of the sum. "What a price!"

"Why won't you accept the offer?" asked Jacqueline, suddenly addressing Oliver. She spoke too almost eagerly.

Again Oliver did not answer at once. But he looked straight at Jacqueline once more, and then said in a low voice, with his eyes still on hers:

"You know that I would never sell that picture,

Jacqueline. Besides I have not the right to do so, even if I wished. I consider that it is your property."

A curious, mysterious smile of satisfaction hovered around Jacqueline's mouth, but she made no answer. Her mother, looking at her, could not be sure whether her gratification came from the fact of Oliver's recognition of her rights to the picture, or because of the feeling in Oliver's heart, which his persistent refusal of the offer indicated.

"And are you really not going to stay here a little, Oliver?" asked Nelly as she sat down at the table and threw off her coat and gloves, displaying her usual lack of care of her things.

"Oh no! I could only afford the time to settle with the greedy Hoskins."

"Oh, Oliver darling," said Mrs. Brent gently, reproachfully and with tears in her eyes. "Surely you might stay a little longer."

"Perhaps I'm not wanted," he said with a fugitive smile, looking at Jacqueline.

Jacqueline, having arranged her parcels carefully on a chair, now turned towards a bewildered attendant to give the order for the tea—but as she did so she raised her eyes to Oliver's and said gently, as if in rebuke:

"Oh, I'm quite sure that everybody here wants you!" And Oliver's eyes acknowledged his gratitude for her words.

And while she began with her mother's help to settle the tea-things, Mrs. Brent and Nelly carried Oliver off to the other end of the room and set to work to

convince him that he must come and stay for a few days at Rose Lodge. In the end they won the day—though Jacqueline and Françoise both knew that he had agreed to remain in London only because of Jacqueline's implied permission.

So there were five of them to return to Kensington in the taxi.

That evening the two Thornton girls and their brother Robert came to dinner. They were introduced to Oliver—whose name they knew and whose glory appeared a great thing to them. Both Elsie and Janet were loud in their praise of his Academy picture and its magnificent likeness to Jacqueline.

When Jacqueline came down to dinner, her mother was surprised to see that she had put on a gown she had been reserving as her best. It was of white *crêpe de chine*, inserted with fine lace and lined throughout with rose-coloured silk which sent a warm glow as of sunlight shining beneath the thin filmy material. Through her hair, dressed high upon the crown of her head, she had drawn a blue ribbon, the colour of darkest lapis lazuli, and into her white satin sash, at the waist, she had tucked a large pink rose. Compared to the boyish and untidy Nelly and to the two badly-dressed English girls, in their cheap, ready-made blouses of white silk and dark skirts lined with cotton linings, Jacqueline appeared like a feminine being of another sphere. Oliver looked at her admiringly as she came into the white panelled drawing-room, tall, slim and stately.

But there was a look of maturity on her face which

had not been there before, and a serious expression in her eyes that he did not know. She was perfectly natural in her bearing towards him, only her eyes avoided his when they spoke together upon subjects of general interest at dinner with the others. Oliver sat at the head of the table, and Françoise on his right side. On his left was Elsie Thornton. During the meal he conversed chiefly with his two neighbours, and Jacqueline, from her seat lower down the table by the side of Robert Thornton, caught herself looking in Oliver's direction occasionally, and feeling unpleasantly disturbed when she saw him bending over Elsie's bright golden head, though she did not acknowledge that feeling of discomfort even to herself. To prove her indifference, however, she laid herself out to be charming to young Robert Thornton, nearly causing that estimable young man to lose his head, and making Nelly, who had hitherto considered Robert her special property, quite jealous.

After dinner, the evening was so cool and balmy that Nelly suggested that they should all go into the garden and take their coffee on the lawn. In the soft darkness of the summer's night, Jacqueline was curiously elated and yet strangely troubled. She had felt a little hurt because all through the dinner Oliver had not once addressed her directly, though he had chatted unrestrainedly and in a most interesting way with Elsie Thornton. Now Elsie Thornton's ideas on art were most rudimentary and commonplace, and Jacqueline felt strangely hurt to hear him explain certain of his own theories to the girl as if her opinion

really mattered to him. And Jacqueline, who formerly had taken so great an interest in these theories and had discussed them with Oliver before their quarrel, felt a sort of unaccountable jealousy now, to hear him speak of his ideals of art with another woman. She sat down in a garden chair that had been moved out of the circle and stood apart. She did not take coffee. But she remained quiet and silent, conscious only of the soft balminess of the evening air and feeling oddly content though still perturbed. The other young people grouped around the coffee table, were chattering like so many magpies.

Suddenly Jacqueline felt that someone standing up beside her chair in the darkness was folding a soft woollen shawl around her shoulders. She shivered and looked up. But already she knew that it was Oliver.

"I've brought you this shawl, Jacqueline, I know you are '*frileuse*' and you might take cold. . . ."

He spoke in French and the use of another language seemed to separate them still more from the group of the others, who were talking in English.

"Thank you," said Jacqueline gently, as she drew the soft warmth about her.

Oliver could not speak for a few moments, so great was his emotion at Jacqueline's nearness. But he still stood by her side, and taking advantage of their isolation from the merry group beyond, he bent over her chair and whispered gently, speaking once more in French:

"Have you forgiven me, Jacqueline?"

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For a breathless instant he waited for her answer.

"Yes, Oliver." And after a very slight hesitation she added: "Thank you."

She spoke very gravely. But Oliver understood.

CHAPTER XX

THE following morning Jacqueline went to her mother's room early, as she went each morning to make her plans with Françoise for the day. Françoise was combing out her long brown hair when Jacqueline entered, and once again the daughter was struck with the mother's youthfulness and charm. The bright waving tresses softly brushed and shining, framed her fine oval face delightfully and her regular features had a youth and expression which struck Jacqueline more particularly than ever it had done hitherto. Since their full explanation some months back, she had learned to look upon Françoise with a more critical eye, and more and more each day she found herself forced to admire the charm and beauty of her mother.

"How girlish you look with your hair down, *maman chérie*. You positively look younger than I do. . . . There's such innocence too in your sweet expression."

And she took Françoise's face between her two palms and contemplated it with love.

"There's not a wrinkle on your skin, and your eyes are as bright as a little child's! Mother darling—" she added in a deeper tone after a little pause.

"Mother darling, is it true that no man except my

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father has ever made love to you? You are so attractive—so adorable. [a] [a] [a] It seems almost impossible!”

Françoise blushed scarlet and strove to tear herself from Jacqueline's grasp. But Jacqueline held her tightly.

“Tell me, mother darling; confess to your child. She will understand you only too well. . . . Alas!”

“But, my dearest, there's nothing to tell,” said Françoise. “Since your father's death I have never had a single thought in the world but for you.”

Jacqueline, silent, withdrew her hands from her mother's face and allowed her to proceed with her toilette. She stood by the side of the dressing-table which stood in front of the window, and let her eyes wander over the tree-tops in the garden beyond.

“Then it is a pity—a thousand pities—that it was so, mother! Every human being has a right to try for their own happiness. And you, more than most, would have been entirely justified in building up the joy of life for yourself again when you learnt that you had been so deluded.”

“But, my dearest, I had no wish to seek for a new love. I had you! No man could be to me what you were! I would have given no stranger any right over you, my precious one.”

“But there are other demands than those of motherhood in a woman's heart. And if she has been mistaken in a first venture, she has the right to try again for happiness.” Jacqueline spoke with gravity

and with a personal conviction that showed that while speaking of her mother's case, she was also alluding to herself.

Françoise understood what Jacqueline's words implied, but wilfully disregarding the personal note in her daughter's remark, she pursued:

"My dearest, I never once contemplated a second venture. I think that the springs of passion were dried up in me. I had been educated to accept fate passively. I had not the vitality in me to gather up the fragments of my broken being once more and seek love again. I resigned myself to being a failure in matters of love. And I put all my passion into the mothering of you."

Jacqueline bent over her mother and kissed the long, unbound hair which still rested on her white shoulders.

"You have at least a perfect genius for mothering, *maman chérie*, I am bound to admit that," said Jacqueline, kissing her once more. "But it is evident that you were trained to be a victim, mother darling. You were not of our present generation you see. *We* apparently are made to victimize."

Françoise made no answer. She seemed suddenly fired with a desire to get through her dressing quickly. She wound up her long and wonderful hair and began slipping into her gown. Jacqueline was looking out over the tree-tops as if beyond the horizon she saw the wraiths of other hopes arising in the dim future.

When Françoise was ready she spoke again.

"My darling, I want to ask you something."

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Jacqueline turned round with wide-open, surprised eyes.

"Ask, mother mine. What is it?"

"What do you intend doing with Oliver?"

Jacqueline made no immediate answer. A deep flush spread over her face and she turned her gaze away once more to the distant horizon. There was no indication in her attitude to prove that she had heard her mother's question.

There was a pause of a few moments.

"Eh!" Françoise questioned again. She seemed wilfully determined to get an answer.

"*Maman chérie*, I cannot yet say what I shall do. Besides, how do I know what he wants?"

"He wants you to marry him, Jacqueline. I know that."

Jacqueline was again silent for a few moments. Then suddenly she turned and rushed over the space that separated her from her mother's side, falling into Françoise's open arms.

"*Maman chérie!* . . . Since you wish to understand. . . . Let me tell you this. . . . I do not know what I feel really. . . . I cannot say. I love Oliver with all that is best in me. That at least I do know. . . . He is in a way indispensable to my intellectual self. I have found that out now. But the affection, and the sympathy, and even the tenderness I have for him lack the magic that would make it real love. . . . Oh mother. . . . the magic of love! . . ." and her thoughts dwelt for a rapid instant on the memory of

Jérôme's words under the moonlight in the wood of La-Celle-St.-Cloud, and of his kiss on the threshold of the studio. "O mother! *Must* I let my reason, my brain, and all that my education has developed in me, alone guide me? May I not listen to the divine inspiration of the physical being in me that calls for the magic that is held in human love—in a human kiss?"

"Of course you may, my sweetest." For a few moments Françoise, holding her child to her, seemed to be collecting her thoughts. "But listen to me and let my experience guide you if it can. In so many things you are far wiser than I, my daughter. But in others, in spite of all that you may know theoretically, I know better than you, because I have lived life while you, so far, have only dreamed it. It is not always the better man who can inspire that magic, my Jacqueline. It is more often the worse man. You may think I exaggerate, but alas! what I tell you is unfortunately the exact truth."

"I believe you, mother; indeed I do. Because I *will* believe you. . . ."

"It is the man who has the most experience of many women who is often the more attractive, the more perfect and the more subtle lover, my dearest. It is the man who has practised the art of love often and with many different women who has become skilled. And it is just because he has become so proficient in the art and has made of love a mere pastime, that he is precisely the man who cannot be depended upon morally."

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"I understand . . . mother. . . . I understand."

"The man who feels deeply, sincerely, is often less convincing because the very intensity of his own emotions forbids him the more elaborate expression of them. He is moved too deeply to be capable of fine words and subtle imagery. . . . So it is with Oliver. That is why he lacks the magic for you. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, mother, you are right. I feel that your explanation is entirely wise. But let me explain to you all that I feel. Be my sweet, my dear confessor before whom I may bare my entire heart . . . without fear of severe criticism. Understand me better even than I understand myself."

"Dearest, I understand you only too well, I am your mother and you are my child—bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. I bore you into the world with ineffable pain, and I have been both father and mother to you. Try to learn your lesson through the experience of my own tortured heart. That magic for which you yearn—and which I understand so well—is precisely the kind of attraction which I felt towards your father, and which every very young woman feels for the man the first time she loves. I was quite young, untried and inexperienced when I was married to your father, and although he never loved me and therefore never lost his head himself, he made me love him because of the careful and artistic technique (I can find no other word to express myself better) of his methods."

"Yes, yes!" cried Jacqueline, her burning face buried still deeper in her mother's breast.

She thought of Jérôme's subtle love-making which appealed only to the senses, and not to the soul—compared to Oliver's direct and sincere appeal to her heart.

"The truth is," pursued Françoise in her soft, even voice, her warm breath sweeping through Jacqueline's hair, "the truth is, darling, that when a man makes a woman love him in such a way, he makes her love love itself, and not the lover. Don't you see, darling?" Françoise's voice trembled and broke. "Your father had been the lover of so many women before I married him, that love-making had become as a mere amusement for him. And I was young, fresh and desirable as you are now. But he made me in love with love only. Perhaps that is why my love for him faded so quickly and disappeared almost as if it had never been." Françoise bent still lower over Jacqueline's bowed head as she whispered to her: "And that was precisely the feeling that Jérôme aroused in your young heart, my sweetest, was it not?"

"Yes, mother, yes," Jacqueline whispered in reply. And then pressing her face still deeper into the divine refuge of her mother's breast as if to conceal the remorse and shame of her words, she added:

"Such men are not the best, perhaps. But they make a woman . . . want to live. . . ."

Françoise was silenced. She kissed the bowed head on her breast and then gently stroked Jacque-

line's golden hair as if to soothe the pain of conflicting thought in her child's mind.

"Listen, sweet," she whispered once more. "If I could rejoice in anything that has hurt you, I would rejoice that experience has come to you now, before it is too late to build up your life definitely. Knowledge might have come to you after marriage only, as it did to me! It is lucky that it came before anything irrevocable, is it not? For you will be a better and a wiser woman now. You will know the right from the wrong love. You will understand that a woman cannot, must not, build up her whole life of happiness on the evanescent, perishable fabric of that splendid but deceptive magic of which you speak—but upon the conscious knowledge of a man's true character. . . ."

Jacqueline lifted up her head and dried her eyes.

"Oh mother! For all your apparent youth, how wise, how terribly wise you are! You are in yourself an education!"

Françoise smiled tenderly, and kissed her softly. Then she definitely finished her toilette and together they turned to go downstairs.

"Be kind to Oliver, darling. He is so devoted to you. Promise me you will be kind. . . ."

"Oh, *maman chérie*," said Jacqueline, smiling, "you are but a wicked matchmaker after all, I fear!"

"But you will be kind to the poor fellow, Jacqueline? Promise me!" insisted Françoise.

"Yes, I will go as far as that. I will be kind, I promise no more."

CHAPTER XXI

AFTER the evening of Oliver's arrival and his short conversation in the garden, the old *camaraderie* was resumed between him and Jacqueline, and progressed afterwards as if there had never been a break. Oliver yielding to the entreaties of his aunt and sister and rejoicing in Jacqueline's newly returned graciousness, decided to spend the rest of the summer at Rose Lodge.

In a sense he was quite the lion of the season, for the success of his picture had suddenly placed him among the foremost English painters of the day. But although the bewildered dealer had received orders from his patron to increase the price offered to a still higher figure, so determined was Silas Van der Weyde to secure the "Modern French Girl," Oliver was still as equally determined not to sell.

After several personal interviews with Mr. Van der Weyde, who still allowed his offer to remain open, should the young painter change his mind later, Oliver abandoned all thought of his profession for the time being and gave himself up with great zest to the expeditions of sightseeing with his sister, and Madame Réville and her daughter. Mrs. Brent declared herself too old and too lazy to visit museums, picture galleries and churches. She remained at Rose Lodge reading novels all day, lying in the peace

of the shady garden, concocting with her cook strange menus which she fondly imagined to be the acme of French *cuisine* for the delectation of her guests. No amount of sojourns in foreign lands could alter or even affect Mrs. John Brent's British philistine soul. But as she was kindness and hospitality incarnate, even her ever-recurring lack of tact as well as her vain endeavours to acquire knowledge of French cooking, were very easily condoned faults.

One day, towards the end of June, Oliver asked Jacqueline if she had been to the Academy to see her own picture. She was obliged shamefacedly to admit that she had not done so. For some reason, inexplicable to herself, though it had been quite clear to her mother, Jacqueline had not been able to summon up the courage to go and look at the picture Oliver had painted of herself. In her present state of mind she was instinctively afraid to face the soul which she knew looked out of her own eyes in Oliver's picture. She felt unconsciously that she could not confront that expression of herself just yet. But she could not explain her curious aversion to Oliver, and for the first time in her life was too shy to seek for an excuse. Again Françoise, ever vigilant, came to her daughter's aid.

"You see, dear Oliver, Jacqueline has been so much taken up with the collections of old paintings, and with other things of newer interest in London, that she has not found time yet for modern pictures."

"I understand," said Oliver. But though he felt

pained, and showed that he was hurt, he yet was conscious of a strange inner elation which he concealed. However, at his expression of disappointment Françoise made another effort to comfort him.

"Perhaps," she said, "perhaps we all dimly felt you would come over at some time or other, dear Oliver. And so Jacqueline waited for you to escort her."

Jacqueline, who also had noticed Oliver's look of painful surprise and had understood it, but felt incapable of any consolation, shot a glance of gratitude at her mother. Françoise and Jacqueline now understood one another so well that no words were ever necessary between them to explain their almost simultaneous emotional comprehensions.

"Well," said Oliver turning to Jacqueline, "if that is so, then I propose taking you to visit the Academy and your own picture myself."

"Can we go down on the top of an omnibus?" asked Jacqueline with a return of her old archness. At which remark an immediate fit of laughter burst forth from Nelly, Robert and the two Thornton girls who were present, that immediately dispersed all trace of conflicting emotions between herself and Oliver. For Jacqueline's love for London omnibuses had become a regular mania with her, and was treated as a standing joke among them all. But she had won the laughter of her friends with intention, having sought by her tone of levity to disperse the feeling of constraint between herself and Oliver.

"Yes, of course we can."

Arrangements being hurriedly made, Oliver immediately after lunch piloted Jacqueline down to the red omnibus which plies for hire between Kensington and Piccadilly. There were only two vacant seats on the top, which they eagerly seized upon.

On the way down they had another long conversation concerning modern art in France and England. When Jacqueline's admiration of Oliver's mind had been forced upon her, during the painting of her portrait, she had been obliged also to admit to herself that no other human being's conversation pleased her as did Oliver's. It was astonishing how sympathetic his ideas were to her, and now she delighted in the thought that she had made friends with him again. For he had entirely taken up his position of friend, philosopher and intellectual comrade once more. The old confidence was now resumed between them as before. The Oliver whom Jacqueline had discovered during their stay at *Les Peupliers* was not only necessary to her intellectual development, but he had also made himself very dear to her heart. Indeed, before Jérôme d'Ablis had arrived, and with his compelling charm drawn Jacqueline's thoughts away from the young painter, Jacqueline had almost been in love with Oliver. Françoise, with her material perspicacity, had seen the mysterious change in her child's feelings from the very beginning of Jérôme's visit, but had been powerless to defend her. And now that the danger had been averted, she devoutly hoped that Oliver would be able to win Jacqueline back to him once more by his sterling merits, both moral and

mental. Though she was unable herself to satisfy Jacqueline's demands for intellectual companionship, yet she realized the immense force that could be wielded over Jacqueline's mind by those who could respond to those claims. She made herself the conscious ally of Oliver, and in so far as she was capable of influencing her child—and her influence on Jacqueline's feelings was greater now even than the girl herself knew—she taught her daughter to understand the generous greatness of Oliver's love.

During those long summer evenings when it was too chilly to sit out in the garden at Rose Lodge, Jacqueline and Oliver read books together, which they discussed, sometimes with much warmth. Often they went to a play and were indeed much alone and thrown into one another's society, for about this period it was observable that Nelly was becoming more and more interested in Robert Thornton, and these circumstances seemed to combine to bring them more than ever together. To the great amusement of Françoise and also of Jacqueline, Nelly and her sport-loving young admirer seemed now to have more than a mere predilection for one another's company, and appeared to have developed a continual craving for one another's presence. Not only did they go regularly to Lord's to attend the great cricket matches together, but often on Saturday afternoons, Robert would take Nelly down to the river and row her about for many hours together. During these long *tête-à-têtes*, there was often complete silence between them. Robert was not a loquacious lover, but his face, as he

gazed upon the lady of his choice, was a study in itself, insomuch as it could not conceal his feelings. One day, as their boat lay supine on the softly lapping water near a green bank of the river, Robert, who had been silent for over an hour, gazing amorously upon Nelly, leaned towards her as she lay on the boat cushions patterned with Union Jacks.

"What a ripping girl you are, Nell! I wonder if you could put up with a duffer like me for a husband?"

'And Nelly, blushing crimson, looked at him from beneath the shadow of her broad-brimmed, flapping hat, and buried her face deeper into the flag of her country.

"Perhaps I could, Bob," she murmured.

'And so they returned to Rose Lodge that evening an engaged couple.

They made no immediate confidence to Mrs. Brent, but the aunt, who adored her niece, observing the two young people when they returned from the afternoon's expedition, remarked to Françoise when they were alone together that she would not be surprised if the "match" between her niece and Robert Thornton would "not be long now in being made!" And Françoise, smiling indulgently over her everlasting embroidery, replied that if it were so, she would all her life regret not having been present at Robert's proposal!

When Jacqueline and Oliver arrived at Burlington House, they went straight through the crowd to the room where Jacqueline's portrait was hanging. There was a thick agglomeration of admiring visitors

around it, so that at first the young painter and his model could get nowhere near to the canvas. But as the crowds moved away they were able to approach more closely, and soon the proud, rebellious face of Jacqueline could be seen from afar towering over the heads of the nearer gazers. Oliver drew her backwards into a freed space and called her renewed critical attention upon it.

Turning suddenly towards her he looked at her intently, comparing her features with those of the picture.

"Can you see now what I wanted to suggest to you? But I put it in because I felt, I knew, that it would come. It lives there now, Jacqueline."

"Perhaps," said Jacqueline slowly and with averted gaze. . . . "I do not know. . . ." And then after a silence she burst out:

"Oh Oliver, I'm afraid that womanly expression of tenderness exists only in your imagination. Have I really ever had it? Shall I ever have it?"

"Yes. You did not have it then. But you have it now, dominant there at present. It is the expression of your soul itself." And Oliver gazed upon Jacqueline again with all his own ardent love in his eyes. And Jacqueline, looking back at him, unfaltering this time, saw that the tenderness he cherished for her was of the same quality as that of her mother. At the very instant in which she conceived the truth she felt suddenly that a strange and serene comfort had come to her restless soul.

The numbers of the crowd had decreased, so by degrees Oliver and Jacqueline drew nearer still to the

picture, and now they were close to it, were almost touching its frame. They spoke in a low, tense whisper, both entirely oblivious of the moving crowd around them. They had almost forgotten that they were not standing alone together in the middle of the world.

"I knew that you only lacked that expression to make of you the finest of feminine creatures, Jacqueline dearest," whispered Oliver again, his eyes on hers. "So I put your soul there even before it awoke, knowing that it *would* awake."

And then, after a pause he added in a low, more intense voice:

"To be frank with you, I must say that I had hoped to bring it there myself, Jacqueline. But I failed! I failed miserably . . . notwithstanding all my love for you. . . . Probably because, in spite of my own passion for you, I was not inspired with the necessary magic. Alas!"

At Oliver's words Jacqueline's heart was thrilled. He had spoken almost the very words she herself had said to her mother! There was something mysterious, marvellous in his divination of herself and of her inmost thoughts.

"Ah! The magic! Then you realize that too, Oliver? You understand that it must exist in love, if love is to be complete?"

And she turned towards him and gazed at him for a long time in wonder. She had never looked upon him, or upon any human being with such eyes before. And gradually, as if a great mystery was slowly be-

ing revealed to her, she saw Oliver in another aspect and he appeared to her as another man . . . as the only true lover worthy of her nobler self. And then at last, gently and languorously, her eyelids fell, covering her eyes from his ardent gaze and a sweet and tremulous shame took possession of her.

"Yes, I understand it only too well, Jacqueline. . . . I bitterly regret that I was not the first to inspire such magic in your heart . . . but" And he hesitated as if in fear.

"But what, Oliver? Please speak all your thoughts. I value your frankness above all things. . . ."

"But . . ." resumed Oliver, laying stress upon his words, "If I have not been able to have the *first* love of your heart, I will hope for something higher still, Jacqueline. I will hope for the *best* love that your heart can ever give. . . . I do not love even Love itself, dear Jacqueline, so much as I love you. . . ." Jacqueline was silent. Her bosom heaved and tears rose in her eyes.

"If I cannot have the better part of you, Jacqueline," pursued Oliver, "then I will renounce you altogether. . . ."

This was the first time that any reference had been made between them concerning the episode of which Jérôme d'Ablis had been the grievous hero. Jacqueline was deeply stirred when Oliver alluded to it, but she made no remark, and save for a tremulous movement of her lips Oliver might have thought that she had not even noticed his allusion. Persistently, he continued.

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"That first love of yours was certainly not the best you had to give, Jacqueline. Some day you will know that."

"Perhaps," said Jacqueline, with a sweet, fugitive smile, which showed Oliver that he might continue on this perilous subject and yet be forgiven. "Perhaps . . . I know that even . . . now . . ."

"It was a will o' the wisp, Jacqueline, unworthy of your nobler self which is of your brain, and of your diviner self, which is of your heart."

"But it was deep . . . It was very deep indeed. . . . You must understand that . . . please, dear Oliver. . . . There is keen comfort for me in the possibility of being frank and sincere with you; and much solace in the knowledge that my sincerity is understood and appreciated by you. I assure you that my plain speaking deserves your respect, for it costs me much to own my folly. . . ."

"Yes . . . yes . . . Be quite candid with me. I love you the more for your truth. . . . But, believe me, the love you felt was deep in the senses perhaps . . . but not in the soul."

"You think so, Oliver?"

"I am sure of that."

"But why are you sure?"

"Because I love you, Jacqueline. . . . And I realize that because I love with the best of myself, it is only the best of *yourself* that could have evoked that response in me."

"But how can you trust a woman who tells you frankly that she has loved another man so profoundly?"

"That love for another taught you suffering, Jacqueline; and I love you the more because of your suffering."

"But why, Oliver, why?"

"Because it has made you a better woman, Jacqueline. Understand this, dearest. . . . I love you not for what you *were* then—before you mistook the false for the real and followed the will o' the wisp. But I love you for what you are *now*."

"Dear Oliver. . . . I am too self-willed . . . too headstrong . . . too much of a spoilt child. I could never be a submissive wife."

"You are the woman I love, Jacqueline."

"And you want me, even as I am?"

"I *want* you exactly as you *are*, neither more nor less."

Jacqueline was silent. Then suddenly she was conscious of the fact that they were in a public place and that the visitors to the Academy were walking round and crowding about them to catch a sight of Oliver's picture—the great picture of the year. She threw one look at Oliver, a look which thrilled him to the heart because it held much promise, though it did not give her soul to his yet. And after a moment's pause, suddenly leaving the paths of sentiment, she reined in her emotions and spoke in a more level voice, though now her eyes sparkled again with mischief:

"Have you quite decided that you are not going to sell that picture, Oliver?"

But Oliver, who could not travel from one mood to another with the same rapidity as Jacqueline, an-

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swered in the same troubled voice in which he had spoken before:

"No, I can't . . . I can't. . . . It would be like selling my own heart, even if you say that I may. I have the best of you there in that picture, Jacqueline. It is the woman that my love itself created . . . I can't let her go."

"Two thousand pounds is a great deal of money for you, Oliver," insisted Jacqueline temptingly.

"I know it is, but then my Jacqueline is far more precious to me." And he looked up at the picture again with the love in his face that had transfigured him in her eyes a few minutes before.

Then Jacqueline suddenly and spontaneously slipped her hand within his arm. He pressed it gently, but his eyes still remained fixed on the picture as if in adoration.

"But," ventured Jacqueline, breaking the new silence hesitatingly, her eyes demurely cast down. "But Oliver . . . if . . . if you had the real Jacqueline—the original of that picture for your very own!"

At first Oliver did not seem to understand Jacqueline's words, and then, as their meaning dawned upon him, he suddenly looked down upon her face with so fierce an expression of almost delirious delight mixed with painful doubt, that Jacqueline lowered her eyes again to avoid the fire of his glance.

"Do you mean that, Jacqueline?" he breathed hoarsely. "Do you really mean that? Or is it your infernal coquetry prompting you again?" His

breath came in short gasps. All his spirit rose in tension against his will to curb his passion. "Don't play with me," he whispered angrily, almost fiercely, as Jacqueline remained silent. "Do you really mean what you have just said?"

But Jacqueline, unheeding his strong language, and the violence of his tone, and still pressing her hand gently upon his arm, though she avoided his glance and kept her eyes lowered, continued quite calmly and serenely:

"We could furnish a delightful flat in Paris with two thousand pounds, Oliver; large enough to take in you and me and *maman* as well, couldn't we?"

"Jacqueline, don't tempt me. . . . Don't play with me . . . don't be cruel. . . . Don't be a coquette. . . . It is too serious." Oliver's whispered voice was terrible and Jacqueline feared that their secret confabulation might reach the ears of the people around. Still standing close to him, she waited for a breathless second and then drew yet nearer still and whispered gently in his ear:

"I think, dear Oliver, that the true magic has come into my heart now to stay for good."

Oliver was too moved to speak. But his glance searchingly met Jacqueline's eyes that now were turned frankly and fearlessly up to his.

What he saw there quieted and reassured him at once.

The unconscious crowd in its admiration of Oliver's genius jostled around them utterly heedless

of their emotion. . . . But the two people in front of the picture understood one another at last, and Oliver, lifting his right hand, closed it over Jacqueline's trembling fingers that lay on his left arm. With that gesture of love and protection he took possession of her for ever.

They drove home in a hansom cab—in a delicious *solitude à deux*, and hardly a word was spoken between them.

Then, with mute accord, they went quietly in to tell their story to Françoise.

They found her alone, with her embroidery in the drawing-room.

"*Maman chérie!*" said Jacqueline triumphantly, as she entered the room: "As I have often told you, you have a perfect genius for mothering. So I have brought you another child to care for. . . . He's rather big and grown up for a little *maman* like you perhaps; but probably you'll find that even he will need your comforting sometimes, when I've a teasing fit on. . . . For I won't promise you even now that I shall ever entirely renounce what you are pleased to call my 'infernal coquetry'!" she said, turning a radiant face to Oliver again.

"My darling," murmured Françoise as she gathered Jacqueline to her heart. "How very deeply happy you have made me. . . ."

"*Maman chérie,*" said Oliver with deep emotion, though he made an effort to join in with Jacqueline's more playful mood,—"*Maman chérie,* I have the honour to ask you for the hand of your daughter,

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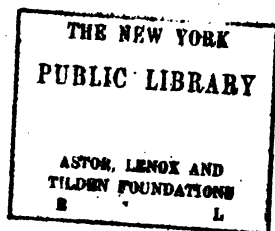
Jacqueline, with your consent to continue her education. It needs careful supervision, even now. . . ."

"I give her to you with joy, Oliver, for I know you alone will make her happy." And turning to Jacqueline:

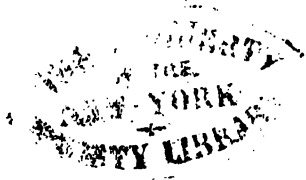
"Then you are content, my darling?"

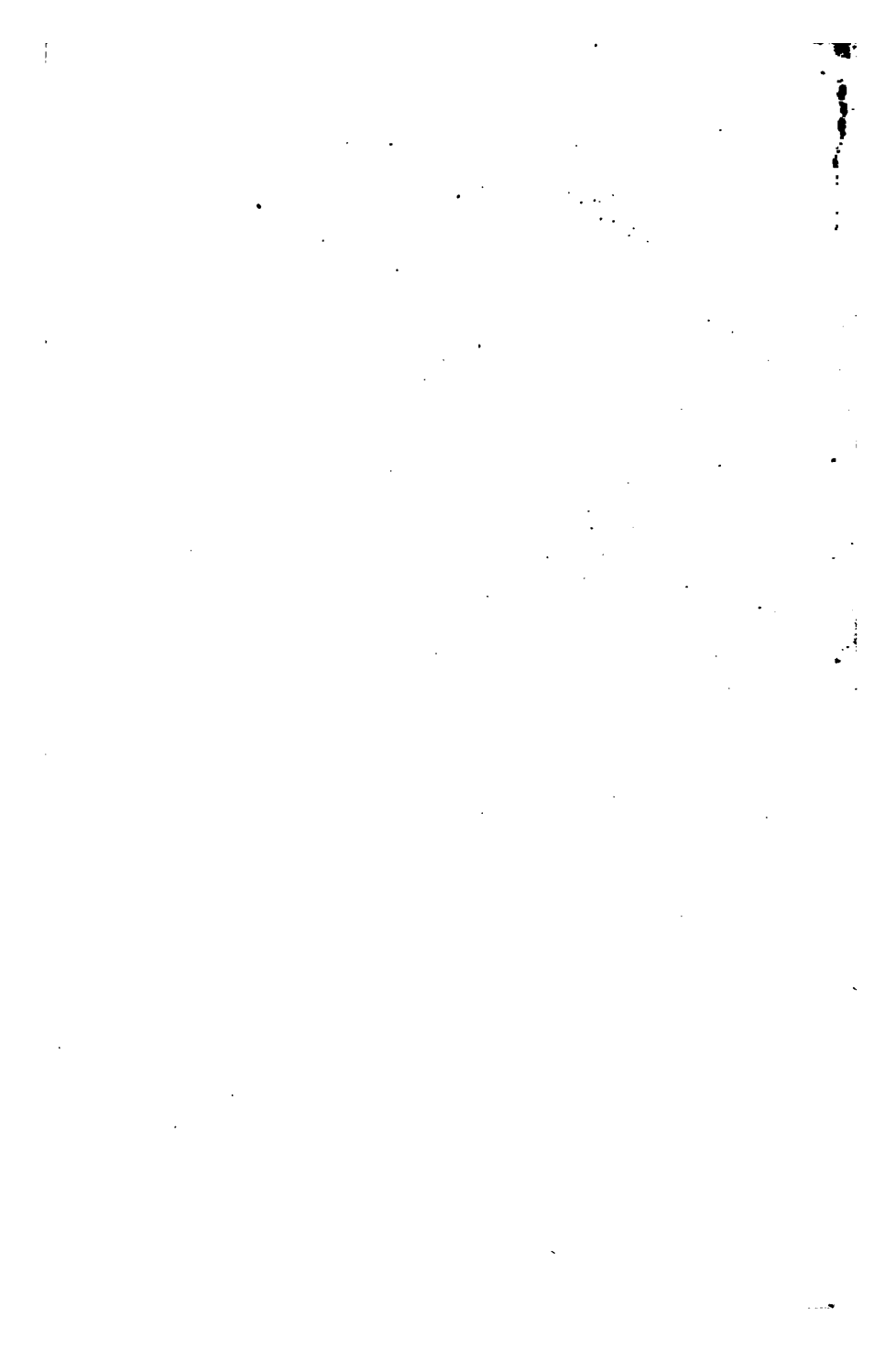
"Yes, *maman chérie* . . . !" cried Jacqueline, throwing herself once more upon her mother's breast, and now letting her happy tears fall unchecked.

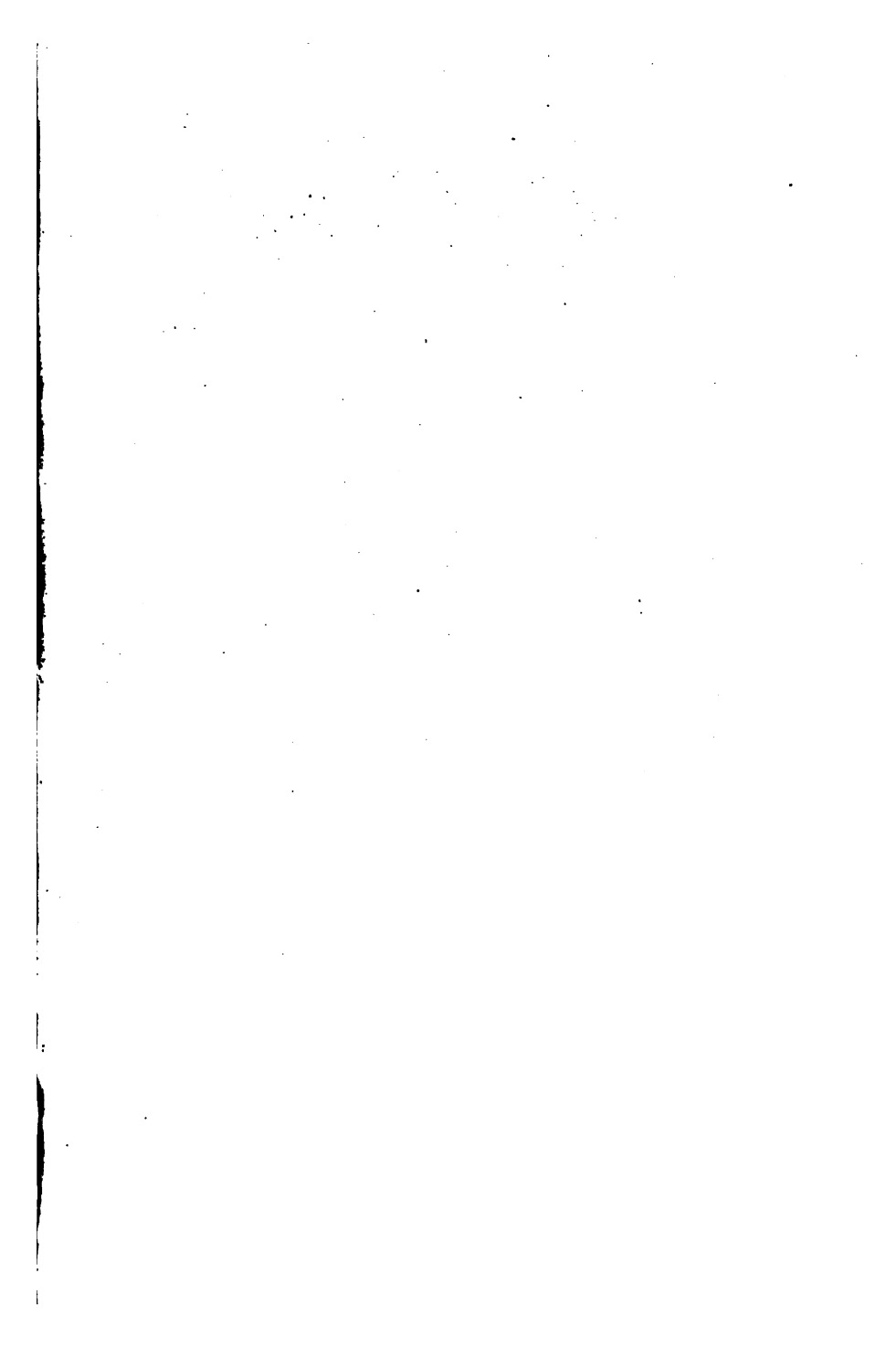
"The magic has come to me at last, mother! I found it in Oliver's heart!"

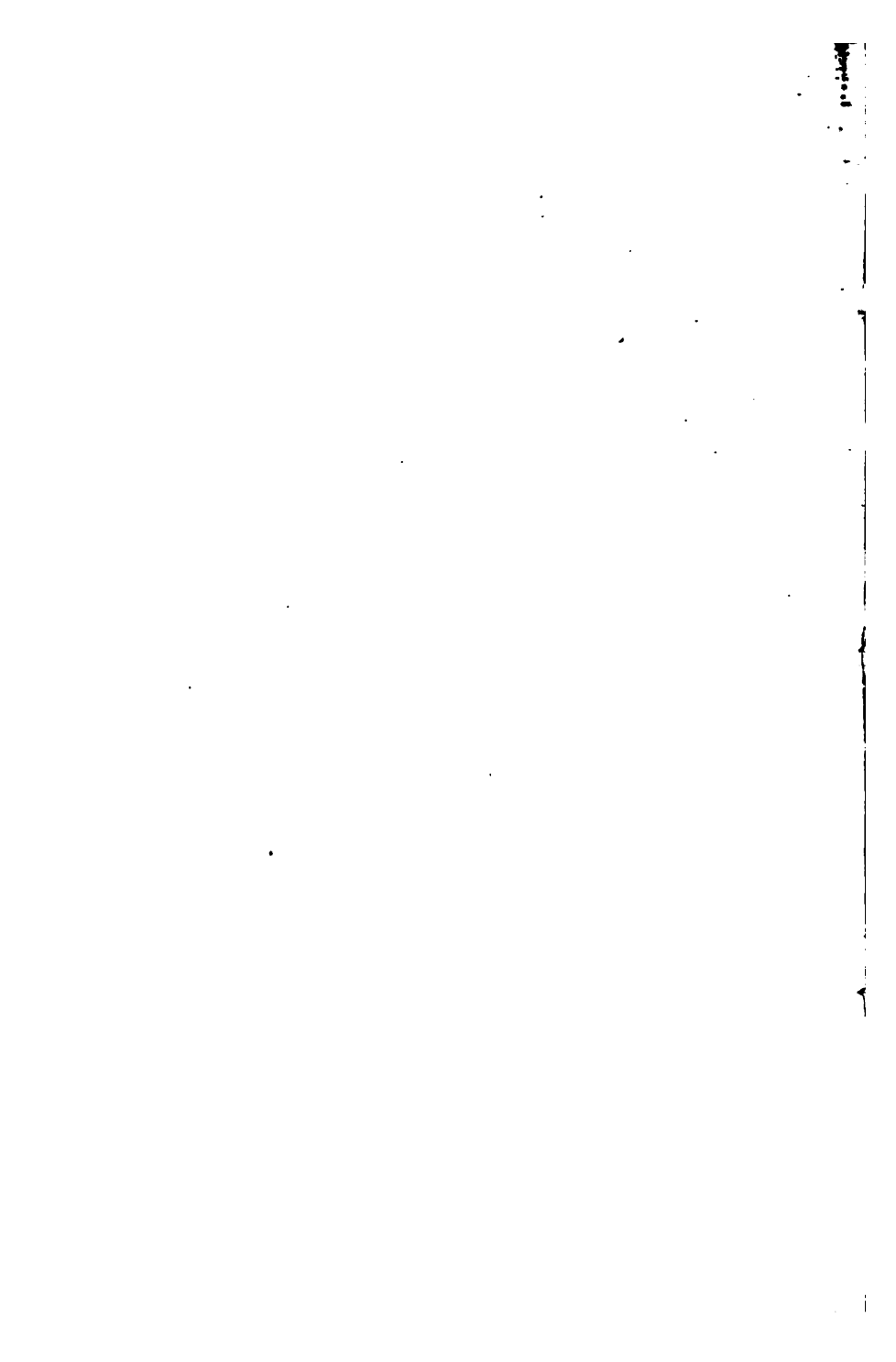


THE END









Schönung